

62a

613. b 18

-3-

T H E

L I F E

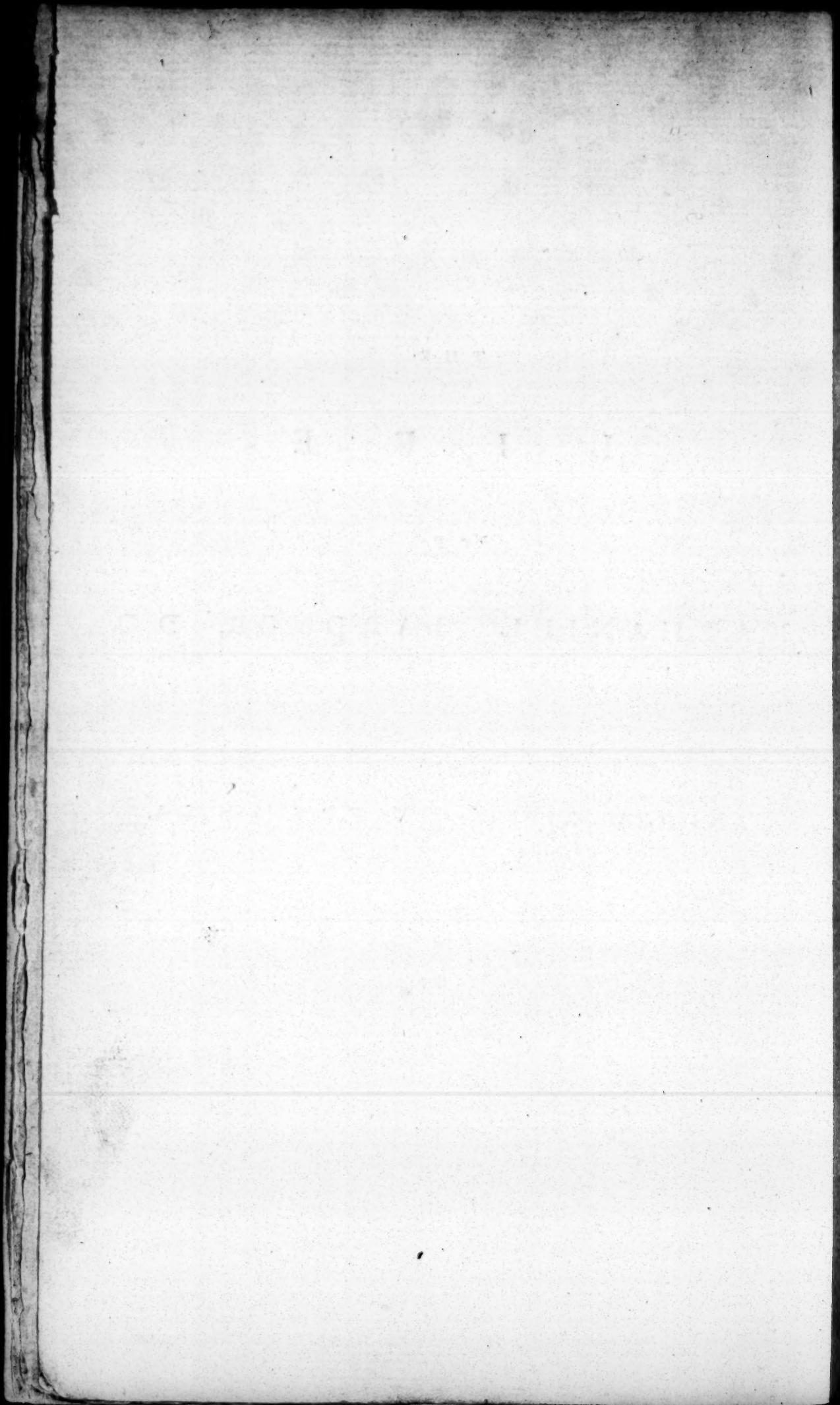
O F

N A T H A N I E L L A R D N E R, D. D.

B Y

A N D R E W K I P P I S, D. D. F. R. S. A N D S. A.

K



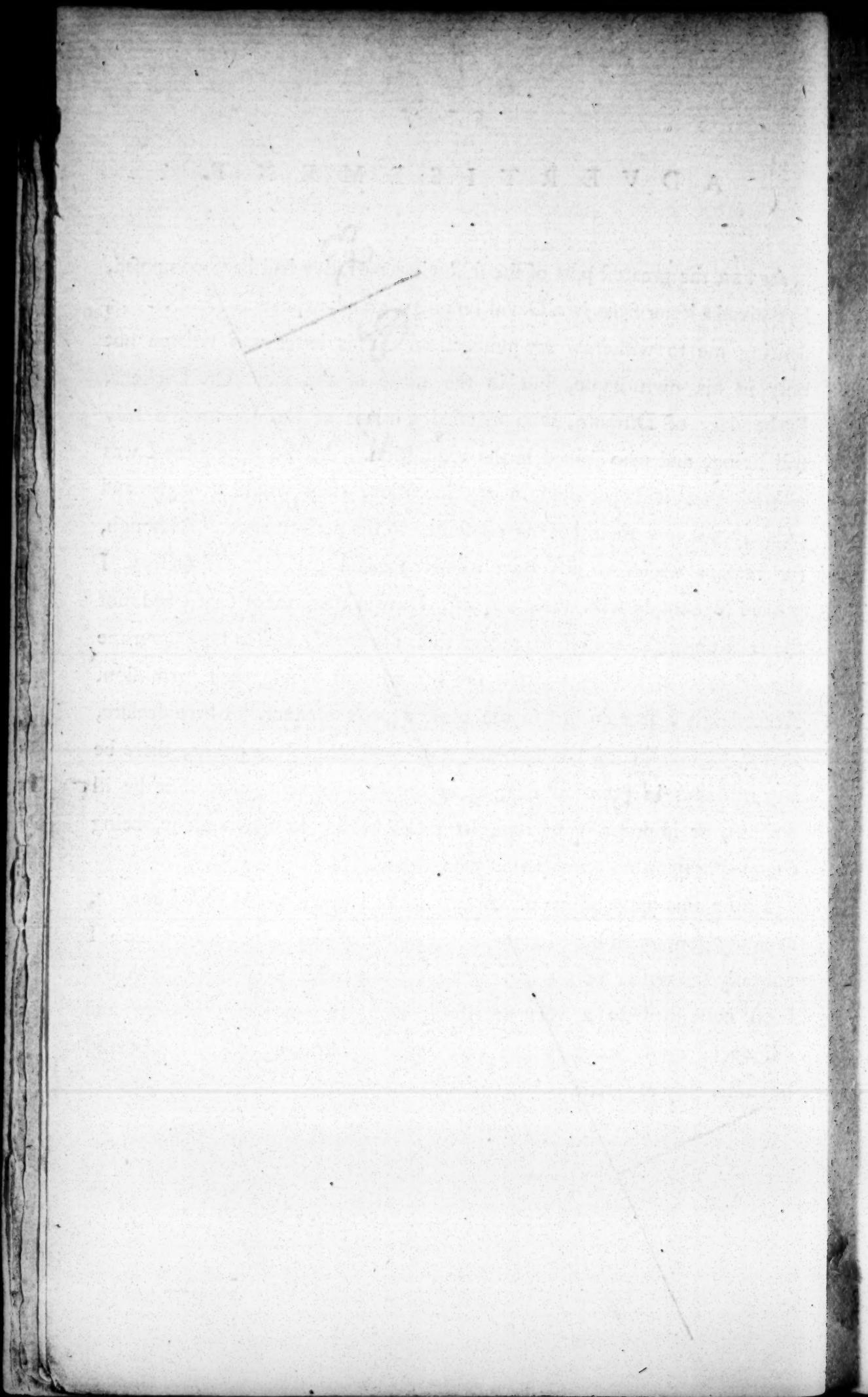
I
de
on
P
ft
at
P
fo
re
th
th
A
th
a
v
c
a
a
b
d
l

A D V E R T I S E M E N T.

AFTER the greatest part of the following narrative had been composed, I received a letter from Mr. David Jennings, grand-nephew to Dr. Lardner, desiring me to withdraw my publication. This letter was written not only in his own name, but in the name of the Rev. Dr. Dickens, Prebendary of Durham, who married a niece of Dr. Lardner, a lady still living, and who joined in the requisition. At the same time I was assured, that if I persisted in my intention, they would strongly and publicly disavow their having consented to the performance. Although, for reasons which to my own mind appeared perfectly satisfactory, I refused to comply with their request, I acquainted them that I had not the least objection myself to record their disavowal, and to take upon me the disgrace of having written the life without asking their permission. Accordingly I here do this in the most express manner. I here declare, that if, in the life of Dr. Lardner now presented to the public, there be any mistakes in point of fact, or errors of sentiment; that if it be ill written, or improperly written, its faults belong to myself alone, being chargeable upon no other person whatsoever.

I take this opportunity of informing the literary world that I am not, as many gentlemen have supposed, the editor of Dr. Lardner's works. I am only the writer of the life. The superintendence of the edition has been consigned to a very worthy person, of approved learning and diligence, whose accuracy and care in the undertaking will, I doubt not, be sufficiently apparent.

ANDREW KIPPIS.



THE
LIFE
OF

DR. NATHANIEL LARDNER.

DR. NATHANIEL LARDNER was born at Hawkherst, in the county of Kent, on the sixth of June, 1684. His father, Mr. Richard Lardner, was a minister of respectable character among the protestant dissenters, and, for a considerable number of years, pastor of a congregation at Deal; but whether he was in that situation at the time of his son's birth does not appear: perhaps, as the toleration act had not then taken place, he might not as yet have become a settled preacher. The mother of our author was the daughter of a Mr. Collier, formerly of the borough of Southwark, but who afterwards retired to Hawkherst, which is a large village, south of Cranbrook, and lying in that part of Kent which borders upon Sussex. It was probably at his grandfather's house that young Lardner was born. Where he received his grammatical education, cannot now be ascer-

VOL. I. b tained;

tained ; though it is supposed, from his father's residence at Deal, that it might be at that place. Wherever it was, there can be no doubt, from the literature which he afterwards displayed, of his having made an early progress in the knowledge of the learned languages. From the grammar school he was removed to a dissenting Academy in London, under the care of the Reverend Dr. Joshua Oldfield. Here, however, he must have continued but a very little time ; for in the latter end of 1699, being then only in the fifteenth year of his age, he was sent to prosecute his studies at Utrecht, under the professors D'Uries, Grævius, and Burman, names of no small celebrity in the literary world. Under such tutors, Mr. Lardner made a suitable improvement in various branches of learning ; and he brought back with him a testimonial from professor Burman, to that purpose.

It was not uncommon, at that period, for the young men who were intended for the dissenting ministry in England, to study abroad, and particularly in the universities of Holland. Several persons, who afterwards became of no small consideration among the dissenters, and who distinguished themselves by their valuable writings, were educated in this manner. Mr. Martin Tomkins went over with Mr. Lardner to Utrecht, and they found there Mr. Daniel Neal.

After spending somewhat more than three years at Utrecht, Mr. Lardner removed to Leyden, where

he studied about six months. In 1703, he returned to England, in company with Mr. Tomkins and Mr. Neal; and from that time, to the year 1709, we have no memorials concerning him. This space was probably spent by him at his father's house, who quitted Deal in 1703 or 1704, and came to reside in or near London; and we may be certain that young Mr. Lardner employed himself in a close and diligent preparation for the sacred profession which he had in view. He was not one of those who are in haste to display their talents in the pulpit; for it was not till the second of August, 1709, when he was above twenty-five years of age, that he preached his first sermon. This was at Stoke-Newington, for his friend Mr. Martin Tomkins, who had become the Minister of a congregation at that place. The subject of Mr. Lardner's discourse was taken from Romans i. 16; “For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: “for it is the power of God unto salvation to every “one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to “the Greek.” There could not have been a more proper text, for a man who was destined, in the order of divine providence, to be one of the ablest advocates for the authenticity and truth of the Christian Revelation that ever existed. During the four years which succeeded to this event, we have no information concerning our author, excepting, that he was a member of the congregational church under the pastoral charge of the Reverend Mr.

Matthew Clark, a gentleman of eminence among the dissenting clergymen of that period, and father to Dr. Clark, a physician of character, reputation, and extensive practice, who died not long since at Tottenham, in Middlesex.

In 1713, Mr. Lardner was invited to reside in the house of Lady Treby, the widow of Sir George Treby, Knt. who had been appointed Lord Chief Justice of the Court of Common Pleas in 1692, and had sustained that high office and dignity, with great integrity and ability, till his decease, in 1702^a. The proposal made to our author was, that he should be domestic chaplain to her ladyship, and tutor to her youngest son, Brindley Treby. To this proposal he acceded; and it need not be said, how well qualified he was, by his knowledge, judgment, and learning, for superintending a young gentleman's education. After having conducted Mr. Treby's studies three years, he accompanied him in an excursion into France, the Austrian Netherlands, and the United Provinces, which employed four months. From a journal which Mr. Lardner kept of this tour, it was evident, that he did not lose the opportunity it afforded him of making exact and judicious observations on the manners and customs of the inhabitants whom he saw and visited, and on the edifices and curiosities of the countries through

^a Beatson's Political Index, part iii. p. 74.

which

which he passed. How long he sustained the specific character of tutor to young Mr. Treby, does not appear; but he continued in Lady Treby's family till her death, which happened in the beginning of the year 1721. By this event, he was removed from a situation which seems to have been an agreeable one, and was thrown into circumstances of some perplexity and suspense. His own remarks will shew the state of his mind at that time. "I am yet at a loss," says he, "how to dispose of myself. I can say I am desirous of being useful in the world. Without this, no external advantages relating to myself will make me happy: and yet I have no prospect of being serviceable in the work of the ministry; having preached many years without being favoured with the approbation and choice of any one congregation^b."

It reflects no honour upon the dissenters, that a man of such merit should so long have been neglected. But it must be observed, that in elections which are dependent upon the whole body of a congregation, a regard will usually be paid, not only to internal abilities, but to external qualifications. It is not probable that Mr. Lardner, even in his best days, was possessed of a good elocution; and his simple mode of composition was not cal-

^b Memoirs of the Life and Writings of the late Rev. Nathaniel Lardner, D. D. p. 4.

culated to strike the multitude. Rational preaching had not then made a very extensive progress among the dissenters ; and it is to be lamented, that, when it became more prevalent, it should too often be disjoined from energy and pathos.

Two years after the death of Lady Treby, Mr. Lardner met with another calamity, which greatly affected him. This was the decease of his former pupil, Brindley Treby, Esq; a gentleman for whom our author had the highest affection and esteem. Indeed, he felt so deeply the loss of his friend, that he imputed to it, in part, the increase of a deafness, which had been coming upon him for some time before. In the beginning of the year 1724, he writes as follows : “ Mr. Cornish preached ; “ but I was not able to hear any thing he said, “ nor so much as the sound of his voice. I am, “ indeed, at present so deaf, that when I sit in the “ pulpit, and the congregation is singing, I can “ hardly tell whether they are singing or not.”

Previously to this account of himself, and at least as early as 1723, Mr. Lardner was engaged, in conjunction with a number of ministers, in carrying on a course of lectures, on a Tuesday evening, at the Old Jewry. His first associates were Mr. Hughes, Mr. Chandler, Mr. Harrison, Mr. Kench, and Mr. Godwin ; the two latter of

* Memoirs, ubi supra, p. 11.

whom

whom soon resigned the connection, and their places were supplied by Mr. Calamy and Mr. Mole⁴.

At

⁴ Mr. (afterwards Dr.) Obadiah Hughes was many years minister of a congregation in Southwark, from which he removed to Westminster. By marriage he became possessed of a large fortune. He was an acceptable preacher, and printed some occasional sermons; but did not otherwise distinguish himself in the literary world.

On Mr. (afterwards Dr.) Samuel Chandler's abilities, learning, and writings, it is needless to enlarge, as they cannot be unknown to any of my readers. Such persons as wish to see a particular account of him, may have recourse to the third volume of the *Biographia Britannica*.

Mr. Harrison was a minister of the Antipædobaptist persuasion, who officiated in Wild-street. Not long after his having been engaged in the Tuesday lecture, he conformed to the church of England, and preached a sermon at St. Vedast's, Foster-lane, in vindication of his conformity. The sermon, which was afterwards printed, did not obtain the approbation of bishop Hoadly. When Mr. Gough, another young dissenting minister, some years after, applied to that prelate for orders, his lordship advised him not to follow Mr. Harrison's example with regard to publication. This Mr. Gough was the author of a pamphlet on the Causes of the Decay of the Dissenting Interest, an answer to which was one of Dr. Doddridge's earliest performances. Mr. Gough published, likewise, a volume of sermons, which are sensible and judicious, and not destitute of elegance. He was of the school of Clarke and Hoadly, and was very intimate with Dr. James Foster. Mr. Harrison became insane, and died in early life: but there is no reason to believe that he was dissatisfied with his own conduct. For these particulars concerning him, the present Biographer is indebted to an excellent and learned friend, the Rev. Mr. Edward Williams, of Nottingham. The author of the *Memoirs of the Life and Writings of Dr. Lardner* is mistaken in asserting that Dr. Harris was one of the Tuesday

At this time, and indeed some years before, Mr. Lardner was member of a literary society, consisting of ministers and lay gentlemen, who met, on Monday evenings, at Chew's coffee-house, in Bow-lane, Cheapside. The chairman of this society, at every meeting, proposed two questions, to be freely and candidly debated ; beside which, each member, in his turn, produced an

evening lecturers : Dr. William Harris was then an old minister ; whereas the lecture was carried on by young men.

Mr. (afterwards Dr.) Kench was, as well as Mr. Harrison, a Baptist minister, and of considerable note in his day. I do not recollect that he published any other than a few occasional discourses.

Mr. Godwin was long the respectable pastor of a congregation that met in Little St. Helen's, Bishopsgate-street. He was an intimate friend of Dr. Doddridge, and assisted him much in correcting his works from the press, and in drawing up the Index to the Family Expositor.

Mr. Calamy, the son of the famous Dr. Edmund Calamy, was an ingenious and learned man. He was for some time assistant to Dr. Benjamin Grosvenor, but declined preaching several years before his death.

Mr. Mole was first a minister at Uxbridge, then at Rotherhithe, and last of all at Hackney. At length he retired to Uxbridge, where he died not many years since. In point of learning, he might be ranked with Lardner, Benson, and Chandler. He was the author of some valuable publications, and employed the latter part of his days in writing, in Latin, a life of the celebrated Laurentius Valla, including the religious and literary history of the time. The manuscript of this work Mr. Mole's executors, with an inattention which can never be justified, permitted to be sold with his books at a common auction.

essay on some learned or entertaining subject. Such institutions have been of eminent service to the republic of literature : they have given rise to many important discoveries, and to many valuable works, which otherwise would never have existed. A history of societies of this kind, which are now diffused through every part of Europe, and are extended to the Western and the Eastern world, tracing their small beginnings, their gradual increase, their more permanent establishment, and their beneficial effects, would be a very instructive and entertaining performance.

Another society, which met at Chew's coffee-house on a Thursday, and of which Mr. Lardner was a member, consisted entirely of ministers. The gentlemen belonging to this society had a design of composing a Concordance of Things to the Bible, and began to methodize the book of Proverbs for that purpose. They had first drawn up a scheme of the whole undertaking, the different parts of which were assigned to Mr. Lardner, Mr. Cornish, Mr. Hughes, Mr. Read, Mr. Clark, Mr. Hunt, Mr. Wroe, and Mr. Savage^c. It doth not

appear

^c Mr. Cornish was assistant to Mr. Joshua Bayes, sen. and continued in that capacity till his death, which happened when he was under forty years of age.—Mr. Hughes I have already mentioned.—Mr. James Read preached to a society in New Broad-street, behind the Royal Exchange, first as assistant to Dr. John Evans, author of the “Christian Temper,” and other useful publications, and afterwards as joint pastor with Dr. Allen.

appear that the design was ever carried fully into execution ; and one impediment to it, so far as Mr. Lardner was concerned, probably arose from the more important work in which he now began to be engaged.

In one of the schemes for the Tuesday evening's lecture, which is preserved in the Memoirs of the Life and Writings of Dr. Lardner, the subjects are entirely of a practical and moral nature, and admirably calculated for instruction and improvement in that view. But besides treating upon subjects of this kind, the gentlemen who carried on the lecture, preached a course of sermons on the evidences of natural and revealed religion. In this course,

len. He had a brother, Mr. Henry Read, who, to a very advanced age, was minister of a congregation which met in St. Thomas's, Southwark ; and of whom the following character was given, between twenty and thirty years ago, in some verses that were written upon the six Tuesday Salters Hall Lecturers of that period.

“ Through youth, through age, O Read, thy honest heart
“ Hath never quitted the consistent part.
“ Thy thoughts are useful, though thy style is plain,
“ And genuine goodness breathes through all thy strain.”

Mr. (afterwards Dr.) Samuel Clark settled at St. Alban's, where he lived many years, and died, with great reputation. He was the author of a collection of Scripture Promises, with a discourse prefixed concerning the proper use and application of them. This work, which has gone through several editions, and has afforded no small degree of consolation to many pious Christians,

course, the proof of the Credibility of the Gospel History was assigned to Mr. Lardner; and in the latter end of the year 1723, and the beginning of 1724, he delivered three sermons on that most important object of Christian enquiry. Here it was that the foundation was probably laid of his great work. Certain it is, that from this time he was diligently engaged in writing the first part of his Credibility. His modesty, however, was such, that he was doubtful about the publication of it, and greatly regretted that, by the decease of his dear friend and pupil, Mr. Treby, he was deprived of his advice, on this and other occasions. It is hence evident how much Mr. Treby had profited by the instructions which had been given him,

tians, was recommended by Dr. Watts. Dr. Clark published, likewise, three sermons on the folly, sin, and danger of irresolution in religion. It is to the honour of this gentleman, that he was the early patron of Dr. Doddridge, who ever retained for him a filial regard and affection. He was the father of the late excellent Mr. Samuel Clark, of Birmingham. Both father and son will probably be noticed when Dr. Doddridge's life shall come to be written in the Biographia Britannica.

Mr. (afterwards Dr.) Jeremiah Hunt, of Pinners Hall, was a very judicious divine, and the author of several learned and valuable publications. Some account of him will be found in the discourses of Dr. Lardner, who preached his funeral sermon.—Of Mr. Wroe I am not able to give any intelligence.—Mr. Savage was a worthy and sensible minister, who settled at Edmonton, where he continued to the time of his decease. I do not recollect that he published any thing, besides a few occasional sermons.

since

since his tutor could thus look up to him for his opinion and assistance.

Notwithstanding Mr. Lardner's diffidence, he took courage to proceed in his undertaking, and in February, 1727, published, in two volumes, octavo, the first part of "The Credibility of the Gospel History; or, the facts OCCASIONALLY mentioned in the New Testament confirmed by passages of ancient Authors, who were contemporaneous with our Saviour, or his Apostles, or lived near their Time." An Appendix was subjoined, concerning the time of Herod's death. It is scarcely necessary to say how well this work was received by the learned world. Not only was it highly approved of by the protestant dissenters, with whom the author was more immediately connected, but by the clergy in general of the established church; and its reputation gradually extended into foreign countries. It is, indeed, an invaluable performance, and hath rendered the most essential service to the cause of Christianity. Whoever peruses this work (and to him that does not peruse it, it will be to his own loss), will find it replete with admirable instruction, sound learning, and just and candid criticism. It was not long before a second edition was called for, and a third was published in 1741.

In the beginning of February, 1728, the course of Mr. Lardner's studies was interrupted, and his life threatened, by the attack of a violent fever, which proved

proved of long continuance. For some time his recovery was despaired of by his relations and friends; but he was relieved, and, at length, happily restored to health, by the divine blessing on the prescriptions of Dr. (afterwards Sir Edward) Hulse, who was called in to consult with the other physicians. Mr. Lardner's own remark upon this occasion was as follows: "I think God put it into my mind to send for Dr. Hulse, for from that time forwards I mended." His pious sentiments after his recovery are thus expressed: "I thankfully acknowledge the great goodness of God, who raised me up again, and desire that this great mercy may be had in perpetual remembrance by me. May I serve him the remainder of my time in this world with inviolable integrity, unshaken in my steadfastness by all the snares of a vain and uncertain world".

With all Mr. Lardner's merit, he was forty-five years of age before he obtained a settlement among the dissenters. On the 24th of August, 1729, he happened to preach for the Rev. Dr. William Harris at Crouched Fryers; and the consequence of it was, that he was unexpectedly invited by the congregation to be assistant to their minister. After mature deliberation he accepted the offer, which, as he declared in his letter of acceptance, was peculiarly agreeable to him, because it allotted him a

* Memoirs, ubi supra, p. 11.

part of service, in the work of the gospel, with their honoured pastor, for whom he had entertained, from his early youth, a high regard and esteem. On the 14th of September, he entered upon his new charge; and the subject of his first sermon was taken from 2 Cor. v. 20. " Now then we are am-
" bassadors for Christ: as though God did beseech
" you by us, we pray you, in Christ's stead, be ye
" reconciled to God." In Mr. Lardner's prayer before sermon, after the intercessions for the public, and for Dr. Harris in particular, he proceeded to pray for himself, in the following strain of integrity and piety: " And we beseech thee, do thou gra-
" cioufly assist thine unworthy servant, whom, by
" thy providence, thou hast also called to serve thee
" in this place. Grant that he may take great heed
" unto himself and his doctrine, that he may save
" himself and them that hear him. Do thou en-
" lighten him more and more in the knowledge
" of the truth; and grant that he may be faithful
" to thee, and speak the word with all boldnes, not
" shunning to declare the whole counsel of God,
" so far as he is acquainted therewith. And may
" the hearts of thy people be opened to receive
" the truth with all readines: may they carefully
" and impartially examine the things which they
" hear, and embrace what is agreeable to thy will.
" O Lord, our hope is in thee! do thou strengthen
" us, and make us sufficient for what thou callest
" us to. Let thy strength be made perfect in our
" weakness:

“ weakness : cause thy face to shine upon us ; let
“ us see thy power and thy glory in the sanctuary.
“ May some who are yet in darkness and ignorance
“ be here enlightened ; may some be converted ;
“ and may thy people be comforted, and conti-
“ nually edified more and more in their most holy
“ faith. May we meet with thee in thine house, and
“ have joy and pleasure in drawing near unto thee.
“ May we, by all thy ordinances, by prayer, by the
“ ministry of thy word, and by thy sacraments, be
“ made more meet for all the events of provi-
“ dence ; for all the services and sufferings of this
“ life ; and for the state of perfection and glory in
“ the world to come.” His account of this prayer
is succeeded by the subsequent ejaculation. “ May
“ God hear my earnest prayers, in enabling me to
“ perform this service he has called me to, so as
“ may be for his glory, and the edification of his
“ people.”

The religious world was at this time engaged in an important controversy, relative to the Christian revelation. That of which I am speaking had been begun by Mr. Woolston, who, perhaps, was rather an enthusiast and a madman than an infidel. By reading Origen, and other mystical writers, he had been led to embrace the allegorical mode of explaining the scriptures, which, at length, he carried to a most extravagant and ridiculous excess. After

* Ibid. p. 12, 13, 14.

several

several absurd publications, he contended, in a tract, intitled, “The Moderator between an Infidel and “an Apostate,” to which two supplements were added, that the miracles of our Lord were not real, or ever actually wrought. For this work a prosecution was commenced against him, in 1726, by the Attorney General; but, in consequence of Mr. Whiston’s intercession, it was laid aside. Mr. Woolston was not induced by this indulgence to continue in silence. He pursued the subject through the years 1727, 1728, 1729, and 1730, in six discourses, and two defences of them; in which he not only maintained the same principles he had done in his “Moderator,” but treated the miracles of our Saviour with a licentiousness, buffoonery, and insolence, that had all the appearance, if not the reality, of malignant infidelity. The prosecution, therefore, was renewed against him; and, being tried before Lord Chief Justice Raymond, he was condemned in one year’s imprisonment, and a fine of a hundred pounds.

A far better method of confuting Mr. Woolston was adopted by many learned divines at that period. The pamphlets written against him were, indeed, very numerous; and among the rest of the defenders of revelation, Mr. Lardner appeared to no small advantage. His work upon this occasion, which was published in the latter end of the year 1729, was intitled, “A Vindication of Three of “our blessed Saviour’s Miracles, *viz.* The Raising
“of

" of Jairus's Daughter, the Widow of Naim's Son, " and Lazarus." It was in answer to the objections of Mr. Woolston's fifth discourse, that this piece was composed. Mr. Lardner had drawn it up for his own private satisfaction, without any immediate view to publication; and his modesty was such, that for a time he did not think of printing it, because his colleague, Dr. Harris, had subjoined to two discourses on the reasonableness of belief in Christ, and the unreasonableness of infidelity, some brief remarks on the case of Lazarus. It was to the advantage of the public that our author changed his opinion. His vindication was undoubtedly one of the best treatises which appeared in the controversy with Mr. Woolston; and it is no exaggeration to say, that it abounds with admirable and judicious observations, and contains a complete defence of three of the most important of our Lord's miracles. Accordingly, it was very favourably received by the learned world, and soon came to a second edition.

Mr. Lardner was not one of those who approved of the prosecution which was carried on against Mr. Woolston by the civil magistrate. In his preface, therefore, he has made some excellent remarks on the subject of free enquiry and discussion. If men be permitted to deliver their sentiments freely in matters of religion, and to propose their objections against Christianity itself, he declares it to be his opinion, that there would be no reason to be in

pain for the event. "On the side of Christianity," says he, "I expect to see, as hitherto, the greatest share of learning, good sense, true wit, and fairness of disputation; which things, I hope, will be superior to low ridicule, false argument, and misrepresentation." He farther observes, that all force on the minds of men, in the matters of belief, is contrary to religion in general, and the Christian religion in particular; and that severity, instead of doing good, has always done harm. Dr. Waddington, at that time bishop of Chichester, who was highly pleased with the whole of Mr. Lardner's vindication of the three miracles, was not equally satisfied with his preface, and, therefore, wrote to him upon the subject. To the bishop our author sent an answer, which produced a second letter from his lordship, and a reply in return. These four letters, which were written with great mutual civility and respect, are given in the Appendix^h; and it will now be little doubted, on what side lay the advantage of the argument.

Another correspondent, occasioned by the Vindication of the Three Miracles, was the Lord Viscount Barrington; who had made some remarks, and suggested some difficulties concerning the death of Jairus's daughter. These remarks are unhappily lost; but Mr. Lardner's letter, in answer to them, is preserved, and will be found in the Appendixⁱ. His lordship, who possessed a very enlightened

^h Appendix, N° I.

ⁱ Appendix, N° II.

mind

mind on the subject of religious liberty, highly approved of Mr. Lardner's preface ; and the approbation of so good a judge was received by our author with peculiar satisfaction. “ I have a great deal of reason,” says he, “ to rejoice, that the manner, in which the argument for free writing is managed in the preface, is not unacceptable to your lordship; for, as to the principles themselves, I had no doubt but they would be agreeable to your judgment, however they may be suspected or disliked by others, who have less studied the Christian doctrine. A true Christian may suffer on the account of his religion, but he can never make others suffer on account of theirs : whatever may be the consequence of it, we are not to support Christianity by force. Our blessed Saviour, rather than make use of compulsion, would chuse to be without a follower. John, vi. 67.”

Though Mr. Lardner's time was chiefly employed in his preparations for the pulpit, and in carrying on his great work, he, nevertheless, found leisure to write other occasional pieces, besides his vindication of the three miracles. In 1730, he sent a letter to Mr. Laroche, to be inserted in his Literary Journal, a periodical work, which, besides giving an account of books, admitted short original communications, consisting of critical disquisitions and

* Memoirs, ubi supra, p. 32.

dissertations. The subject of the letter was a difficulty concerning the omission of the history of our Saviour's ascension, in the gospels of St. Matthew and St. John, though it is related by St. Mark and St. Luke. This difficulty our author has removed with his usual good sense and discernment, as the reader may see by having recourse to the appendix¹. In the same year, he wrote his Letter on the Logos. It was not composed with a view to publication; and, indeed, was not published till nearly thirty years after, when I shall have occasion to mention it again. From a passage in the vindication of the three miracles, I collect that Mr. Lardner had very recently embraced the doctrine advanced in the Letter, or, at least, had not long come to a final determination on the subject. For in that passage he asserts, that our Saviour "descended from the height of glory he had with "the Father^m." Or is it to be considered as an incidental expression, which dropped from our author, though he might for some time have had his doubts and difficulties with regard to the præ-existence of Christ?

In 1733, appeared the first volume of the second part of "The Credibility of the Gospel History; " or the PRINCIPAL Facts of the New Testament "confirmed by passages from ancient authors who "were contemporary with our Saviour, or his

¹ Appendix, N^o III.

^m See the volume of Tracts, p. 41.

"apostles,

" apostles, or lived near their time." It was Mr. Lardner's original intention not to publish a part of the evidence for the principal facts of the New Testament, until the whole work was completed. But he was diverted from this purpose by the importunities of his friends. He could have wished, however, to have exhibited at once the whole evidence of the two first centuries of Christianity ; but he thought it expedient to break off sooner, that he might not render the volume of an inconvenient size. Our author took this opportunity of expressing his gratitude for the favourable reception which had been given to the former part of his work. Besides its being universally well received at home, it was so much approved abroad, that it was translated by two learned foreigners ; by Mr. Cornelius Westerbaen of Utrecht into Low Dutch, and by Mr. J. Christopher Wolff of Hamburg into Latin. " I cannot but esteem it," says Mr. Lardner, " as an uncommon happiness, that my thoughts have been so justly represented by persons well known in the republic of letters for compositions of their own."

The testimonies produced and considered, in the first volume of the second part of the Credibility, were those of St. Barnabas, St. Clement, Hermas, St. Ignatius, St. Polycarp, Papias, Justin Martyr, Dionysius of Corinth, Tatian, Hegesippus, Melito, St. Irenæus, and Athenagoras. Our author has also treated on a fragment called St. Clement's second

epistle, the relation of St. Polycarp's martyrdom, the evangelists in the reign of Trajan, the epistle to Diognetus, and the epistle of the churches of Vienne and Lyons. In the introduction, he hath given an admirable summary of the history of the New Testament. Among other proofs of approbation and regard which Mr. Lardner received in consequence of this publication, he could not avoid being pleased with the following affectionate remarks, by his learned and valuable friend, the Rev. Mr. Joseph Hallet, jun. of Exeter. " Your new volume, with which you have now obliged the world, will, I am persuaded, do good service to the cause of Christianity. You cannot be ignorant of my opinion of it, from the conversation I had the honour to have with you about it in your study.—Your method, upon the whole, pleases me much better than Mr. Jones's, because he hardly ever does more than refer to chapter, verse, and page; whereas you write the words of the text and of the quotation at length; and when he has a huddle of references, you, in the case of Irenæus, prudently chuse *one plain quotation* of each book of the New Testament cited by him. When the work shall be all finished in that manner, it will be worth its weight in gold, and all the Christian world will be obliged to thank you for itⁿ."

ⁿ Memoirs, ubi supra, p. 49.

In 1735, was published the second volume of the second part of the Credibility of the Gospel History. The subjects of this volume were, Miltiades, Theophilus of Antioch, Pantænus, St. Clement of Alexandria, Polycrates, Heraclitus and several other writers near the end of the second century, Hermias, Serapion, Tertullian, a number of authors who required only to be shortly mentioned, and certain supposititious writings of the second century; such as, the Acts of Paul and Thecla, the Sibylline Oracles, the Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs, the Recognitions, the Clementine Homilies, and the Clementine Epitome. Among these different articles, those which relate to St. Clement of Alexandria and Tertullian are peculiarly important, and the remarks on the apocryphal works are very curious and useful. The farther Mr. Lardner proceeded in his design, the more did he advance in esteem and reputation among learned men of all denominations. Even the adversaries to religion could not withhold their testimony to his merit. The noted Dr. Morgan, (afterwards the writer of the "Moral Philosopher," in which revelation was attacked with the greatest virulence, and which hath received many noble and satisfactory answers) in a letter to our author, containing some objections to the first chapter of St. Luke's gospel, compliments him highly on his integrity, impartiality, and candour. This letter, together with Mr. Lardner's sensible and

judicious reply, will be found in the Appendix^o.

In November 1736, our author was attacked by another severe and dangerous fever. The effects of it were such, that he did not recover his health, so far as to be able to preach, till late in the spring of 1737. In that year, he published his "Counsels of Prudence for the use of young people; " "a discourse on the wisdom of the Serpent" "and the innocence of the Dove: in which are "recommended general rules of prudence; with "particular directions relating to business, conversation, friendship, and usefulness." This discourse was generally and justly admired. Indeed, it contains most excellent advice to young persons; advice resulting from the union of wisdom, integrity, and knowledge of the world; and which, if followed, would be the best foundation of happiness, both here and hereafter. If, from the mention of this discourse, any single youth should be engaged so to attend to the directions it contains, as to reduce them to practice, the present Life of Dr. Lardner will have been written to a most valuable purpose.

Dr. Secker, bishop of Oxford, was highly pleased with the Counsels of Prudence. In a letter to our author, he expressed himself in the following terms: "I am also in your debt for those excellent "Counsels of Prudence, which you published some

^o Appendix, N° IV.

" time

" time ago, and would recommend it to you, to
" relieve yourself now and then from your great
" work, and oblige the world with some of these
" little pieces. One would hope they might do
" a great deal of good in it, and I am sure, there is
" great need of doing every thing that can be done
" to promote seriousness and mildness among men."

After giving this testimony to Mr. Lardner's discourse, the bishop adds, that the number of religious persons was dreadfully lessened, and that those who remained were very far from preserving a due moderation and charity one towards another. " I am
" very sorry," says he, " for faults of this kind,
" which we of the establishment fall into; and
" too many of you, I fear, are not less faulty;
" though I do not take the spirit of some papers
" to be the spirit of the Dissenters. May God
" make us all wiser and better; and may he long
" preserve your health, dear Sir, to be useful to
" his church." Here Dr. Secker had a reference
to the controversy which was then carrying on
with regard to the justice, propriety, and expediency
of retaining or repealing the corporation and
test acts; in which controversy, as is usual in such
cases, some warm things (and perhaps warmer
than was reasonable and prudent) might be ad-
vanced by several of the advocates for the dissenters,
as well as by their opponents. In answer to the
latter part of the bishop's letter, Mr. Lardner wrote
as follows : " I have not received any information
" concerning

" concerning the writer or writers of the papers
" to which your lordship refers. But I believe
" your lordship to be in the right, in supposing
" that there are many dissenters, by whom they
" are not approved. So far as I know, the dissen-
" ters are generally in a good temper. Some, in-
" deed, were soured by a late disappointment.
" And they were chiefly of those who used to be
" reputed men of moderation and charity, and who
" were far from being disaffected to the church of
" England. For these, as it seems, were the men
" who were most earnest in the affair: though all
" such did not engage in it with equal earnestness.
" Perhaps this may deserve to be considered." It is hence sufficiently apparent, that our author did not approve of the refusal that had been given to the repeal of the corporation and test acts, though he has expressed himself with his usual mildness of sentiment, and gentleness of language.

In 1738, Mr. Lardner was enabled to give to the world the third volume of the second part of the *Credibility*. This volume carried the evidence down to the year 233, and included Minucius Felix, Apollonius, Caius and others, Asterius Urbanus, St. Alexander bishop of Jerusalem, St. Hippolytus, Ammonius, Julius Africanus, Origen, and St. Fermilian. Some of these articles are of great consequence, and I need not inform my readers that

^p Memoirs, ubi supra, p. 66—68.

this must be peculiarly the case with respect to the account of Origen.

Our author, in this same year, drew up a paper, containing “Remarks upon some Difficulties concerning the Christian Doctrine.” These remarks were in answer to a friend, who had made certain objections to the excellence and usefulness of several of the precepts of our holy religion. Mr. Lardner’s paper, which is inserted in the Appendix, displays his customary good sense, and sagacity of observation⁹.

In 1739, there was only one publication by our author, which was intitled, “A Caution against Conformity to this World.” It consisted of two discourses, which had been preached from Romans xii. 2, and which may justly be considered as a sequel to the Counsels of Prudence. The directions and cautions given in these sermons will be found useful at all times; and an attention to them would be highly seasonable at present; when, without indulging to satirical reflections upon the age, it may too truly be asserted, that the influence of general custom and fashion is not always favourable to those dispositions and habits which are recommended by wisdom, piety, and virtue.

Early in January, 1740, appeared the fourth volume of the second part of the Credibility. Our author began this volume with an account of va-

⁹ Appendix, N^o V.

rious writers of less note in the former part of the third century, and then proceeded to the consideration of Noetus, and others who were called heretics at that period ; such as the Valesians, the Angelics, the Apostolics, and the Origenists. But the volume was chiefly devoted to St. Gregory, bishop of Neocæsarea ; Dionysius, bishop of Alexandria ; and St. Cyprian, bishop of Carthage. The two last articles are very copious and curious.

On the 17th of January, Mr. Lardner lost his father, who departed this life in the 87th year of his age. With his worthy parent our author had resided ever since he had quitted Lady Treby's family ; and how much he was affected by his decease, will strongly be manifested from what he wrote upon the occasion. “ I am,” says he, “ full “ of grief, and find it very difficult to bear up un-“ der the affliction. I entreat the Lord Almighty “ to be my father and protector, to support me, “ and to guide me in the remaining part of my life, “ so as that I may live to his praise and glory. I “ entreat and pray that he will enable me to be-“ have as a Christian, and one persuaded of his “ fatherly care and protection ; and that this af-“ fliction may be improved by me for my farther “ humiliation and repentance ; for engaging in a “ closer dependance on God ; for quickening my “ preparations for another and better world.” He farther writes : “ I find this affliction fit very heavy “ upon me. My dearest brother, *Richard Lardner,* “ died

“ died in April, 1733, some little time before I
“ published the first volume of the second part of
“ the Credibility. The fourth volume of this
“ work was published but a few days before my
“ father died.”

Considering the great age of old Mr. Lardner; that he had been weakened for some years before by a paralytic disorder; and that the deafness of his son must have been some obstruction to their mutual conversation, it may perhaps be thought that the grief which our author has expressed above was rather too excessive. But whoever reflects upon the matter will be sensible, that there must have been something very excellent both in the father and the son, and very engaging in their manner of living together, when a separation, which so long must have been expected, could have been thus painful to the survivor. Such parental and filial regard cannot but appear beautiful and delightful to every well-regulated mind. Dr. Lardner was finely attempered to the social affections; and he has recorded, in his Vindication of the Three Miracles, that, for his own part, he never loved stoical principles or dispositions^s.

A character of old Mr. Lardner was drawn up by Mr. Neal, and will be found in the Appendix^t. It may be observed by the way, that Mr.

^s Memoirs, ubi supra, p. 87—89.
Tracts, p. 48.

^t Appendix, N° VI.

* Volume of

Richard Lardner, our author's only brother, was a counsellor at law. They had but one sister, Elizabeth, who was married to the Rev. Mr. Daniel Neal, now mentioned; a gentleman who, not to speak of his other writings, is well known to the learned world by his History of England, and still more by his History of the Puritans.

Mr. Lardner's excellent friend, Mr. Hallet, entered deeply into his feelings on the death of his father, and wrote him a letter, upon that event, which was full of sympathy and piety*. On the 25th of May, in this same year, our author met with another affliction, in the decease of his highly valued colleague, Dr. William Harris. On this occasion, it naturally fell upon him to preach the funeral sermon, which he did from 2 Thess. i. 10. In the discourse, which was printed, and will be found in his works, he gave a high and, I doubt not, a just character of Dr. Harris. The doctor was, indeed, for a great number of years, a very eminent minister among the protestant dissenters. He had been chosen pastor of the congregation at Crouched Fryers, in 1698, when he was only in the 23d year of his age, and continued in that relation to his death in 1740. It appears that he was a gentleman of various accomplishments, being a man of the world, as well as a scholar. In his writings, he paid a greater attention to neatness and elegance of composition than was done by

* Memoirs, ubi supra, p. 89—91.

some of his brethren; and his discourses on the Messiah have been held in much reputation. A funeral sermon for him was likewise preached and published by Dr. Grosvenor.

Soon after Dr. Harris's decease, Mr. Lardner had an unanimous invitation to undertake the pastoral charge of the society at Crouched Fryers, in conjunction with some other minister of whom they should make a choice. Upon receiving this invitation, he consulted with his friend Mr. Hallet, who strongly urged him to accept of it; and endeavoured to remove the difficulties he might feel on that head, and especially those arising from his deafness. Mr. Hallet wished him to acquire a larger concern in directing the affairs of a congregation than he had hitherto done, and to appear at the Fund, and other places, as one of the chief among the dissenting ministers, according to his real deserts*. Whatever were Mr. Lardner's reasons, he declined taking a share in the pastoral office. It is probable that his deafness contributed, among other causes, to this determination. In November, Mr. (afterwards Dr.) George Benson was chosen sole pastor of the society, and our author continued assistant preacher.

It was not till the year 1743, that Mr. Lardner was enabled to give to the public the fifth volume of the second part of the *Credibility*. This vo-

* *Ibid.* p. 91—95.

lume comprehended St. Cornelius and St. Lucius, bishops of Rome, Novatus, Dionysius bishop of Rome, Commodian, Malchion, Anatolius and three others, bishops of Laodicea, Theognostus, Theonas bishop of Alexandria, Pierius presbyter of the church of the same city, two Doritheuses, Victorinus bishop of Pettaw, Methodius bishop of Olympus in Lycia, Lucian presbyter of Antioch, Hesychius bishop in Egypt, Pamphilus presbyter of Cæsarea, Phileas bishop of Thmuis in Egypt, Philoromus receiver-general at Alexandria, Peter bishop of Alexandria, and the Miletians. In an advertisement, prefixed to the volume, our author expresses his apprehensions that some persons might be ready to charge him with prolixity in the conduct of his undertaking. But he hath offered such reasons for the method he has pursued, as will satisfy every reflecting mind. Among other things, he observes, that the particular design of his work was to enable persons of ordinary capacities, who had not an opportunity of reading many authors, to judge for themselves concerning the external evidence of the facts related in the New Testament.

“ I write,” says he, “ chiefly for gentlemen, and such others as are not possessed of large libraries; and therefore I produce passages of ancient authors at length, and oftentimes transcribe also the original words at the bottom of the page, that this evidence may at once appear in a clear and satisfactory light.”

In the same year, the world was indebted to Mr. Lardner for another valuable performance, the title of which was, “The Circumstances of the Jewish People an Argument for the Truth of the Christian Religion.” It consists of three discourses on Romans xi. 11; in which the grand points insisted upon by our author, and maintained with great perspicuity and success, are, that the present state of the Jews was foretold by our Lord; that it is agreeable to many prophecies in the Old Testament; that it affords reason to believe that the Messiah is already come; that it furnishes an argument for the divine authority of the gospel; and that it exhibits an attestation to divers things, upon which some evidences of Christianity depend.

Mr. Lardner sustained this year a domestic affliction, in the decease of his brother-in-law, the Reverend Daniel Neal, M. A.; and in the next year (1744) he had the calamity of losing a most intimate and beloved friend, and a distant relation by marriage, Dr. Jeremiah Hunt. This gentleman died on the 5th of September, and was justly lamented by many of the most respectable dissenters in the city of London. Mr. Lardner preached his funeral sermon, from John xiv. 2; and hath drawn his character at length, and with great affection. Indeed, he appears to have deserved every encomium. Among his other qualities, he had an uncommon talent at communicating instruction by

conversation, which he carried on in so perspicuous and pleasing a manner, that it mightily engaged the attention and won the hearts of young people. I have seldom known more enlightened and judicious Christians than those who enjoyed, in early life, the friendship of Dr. Hunt. The doctor, whose learning was very extensive, and whose knowledge of the scriptures was profound, entertained a great contempt for Infidels, who pretend to condemn revelation, without ever having applied to it a careful study and consideration. Though they are apt to give themselves airs of superior knowledge, he looked upon the whole body of them, as a sort of men, who had only a very superficial acquaintance both with scripture and antiquity. To this ignorance of theirs he in part ascribed their infidelity; for he used to assert, that all antiquity confirms and corroborates revelation^y. These sentiments of Dr. Hunt have their foundation in reason. It cannot, indeed, be denied, that a number of ingenious men, of extensive knowledge in certain respects, are sceptical with regard to religion. But then they have not examined this particular subject with a becoming seriousness and impartiality. They have not thoroughly studied the various external and internal evidences which have been urged in proof of Christianity; and espe-

^y See the volume of Sermons, p. 118.

cially,

cially, they have not searched into the scriptures themselves, thence to deduce the real doctrines of the gospel ; but have assumed their ideas of them, and conceived a dislike to them, from the abstruse systems and formularies which all establishments have adopted. Dr. Hunt had a strong persuasion that the age succeeding that in which he lived would be as remarkable for enthusiasm, as his own was for infidelity. His prediction hath already, in some degree, been accomplished. Enthusiasm hath strongly seized a part of the people, while infidelity has prevailed among others ; so that, betwixt them both, rational religion has suffered not a little. But let not her friends be discouraged ; for, in the due order of Providence, she will, I doubt not, revive with fresh lustre and beauty, and, at length, draw all men after her.

In 1745, Mr. Lardner favoured the public with another volume of his great work, being the sixth of the second part. Excepting one chapter, relative to Archelaus bishop in Mesopotamia, the whole volume was devoted to the Manichees ; and the account of them is eminently curious and instructive. When our author began his work, he declined writing the history of the heretics of the two first centuries, because of the difficulty of the subject, and for some other reasons ; not intending to omit it entirely, but deferring it till another opportunity. But when he came lower, these reasons no longer operated ; and, therefore, from the be-

ginning of the fourth volume, he introduced, as occasion offered, a number of writers who were deemed heretical, and whose testimonies contributed to his main design².

In the same year, Mr. Lardner revised and published a volume of posthumous sermons of the Rev. Mr. Kirby Reyner, of Bristol. This was done at the request of the family; and in serving the family, he did service to the cause of religion; for, if I am not mistaken in my recollection, Mr. Reyner's discourses are of that plain and practical nature, which renders them excellently adapted for the use of common Christians.

It was in the beginning of this year, that Mr. Lardner received a diploma from the Marischal college of Aberdeen, conferring upon him the degree of Doctor in Divinity. The diploma was voted in the most obliging manner, and was rendered agreeable by its having the cordial and unanimous signature of the professors of the college. This was an honour which our author did not solicit, but which, when it was bestowed upon him, he did not think it unbecoming in him to accept; preserving herein the due medium, between seeking for such a distinction, and despising it when offered. His own remark, in the case of Dr. Hunt, deserves notice. "In the year 1729," says he, "the university of Edinburgh, out of a regard to his dis-

² Advertisement prefixed to the fifth volume.

"tinguished

"tinguished merit, complimented him with the
"highest honorary title in their gift; *a piece of*
"*respect, not to be slighted by any man of letters*."
When we consider Dr. Lardner's extraordinary at-
tainments and learning, the reflection which he made,
on receiving his degree, displayed an extraordinary
humbleness of mind. "I pray God," said he,
"I may not be elevated by any acceptance my la-
"bours meet with; but that I may proceed with
"humility, diligence, and integrity in the whole of
"my life".

With relation, in general, to this academical distinction, it may be observed, that when it is conferred without merit, it cannot give honour; that when it is bestowed upon merit, it becomes a proper mark of respect; and that merit, untitled, can shine by its own lustre. Though the friends of the late Reverend Hugh Farmer did not procure for him a diploma, his abilities and learning will carry down his name with reputation to posterity. The title of Doctor could not have added to the celebrity of such men as Richard Hooker, John Hales, Joseph Mede, and William Chillingworth, in the church of England; or of Matthew Poole, John Howe, and Richard Baxter, among the dissenters.

Dr. Lardner, in 1746, was appointed one of the correspondent members at London, of the society

* Volume of Sermons, p. 112.
ubi supra, p. 96.

¶ Memoirs of Lardner,

in Scotland, for propagating Christian knowledge, and protestant principles, in the northern parts of that country, and the numerous islands which are situated near its coasts. This tribute of respect was probably the result of some service or benefaction to that excellent and useful society.

In 1748, our author was engaged in superintending a new edition of the two first volumes of the second part of the Credibility; and in the same year he published the seventh volume of that part. The persons of whom an account was given, and whose testimonies were recited in this volume, were, Arnobius, Lactantius, Alexander bishop of Alexandria, Arius and his followers, and Constantine the Great, the first Christian emperor. There were, likewise, two chapters on the Donatists, and on the burning of the scriptures, in the time of Dioclesian's persecution. It will appear, from the names I have mentioned, that most of these articles are of peculiar importance. The character of Constantine is stated and estimated with equal candour and judgment; and the observations on the story of that emperor's having seen in the heavens, nearly at mid-day, the trophy of the cross, placed above the sun, consisting of light, with an inscription annexed, *BY THIS CONQUER*, are very sagacious and convincing. Credulity not having been Dr. Lardner's foible, he was on that account the more eminently qualified for the execution of the great work he had undertaken. There

was

was an Appendix to this volume, in answer to some remarks which Mr. Jackson had made upon our author's fifth volume, relative to the rise of Sabelianism, and the name of Novatus. Whoever is disposed to look into the Appendix, which in the present edition is subjoined to that part of the Credibility to which it more immediately belongs, will have little hesitation in determining on what side lay the advantage of the argument.

This year Dr. Lardner lost his sister, Mrs. Elizabeth Neal ; whose decease drew from him the following pious and affectionate reflections. “ I am
“ the oldest of the three children which God gave
“ to my honoured parents. I am still preserved :
“ but now all worldly friendships fade, and are
“ worth little. I have lately published the seventh
“ volume of the second part of the Credibility : but
“ a temper and conduct worthy the doctrine of the
“ gospel, are more valuable than any written de-
“ fences and apologies for it, or explications of it.
“ I beg that I may be more and more possessed of
“ that temper of humility and meekness which shall
“ bear good fruits : and I have great reason to think
“ of another world, and the change which I must
“ pass under. I cannot expect, any more, such
“ tenderness and affection as have been shewn me
“ by my father, mother, brother, and sister, now
“ no more in this world.”

• Ibid. p. 97.

A new edition of the third volume of the second part of the Credibility was called for in 1750; and in the course of the same year appeared the eighth volume. This volume began with the council of Nice, and then proceeded to Eusebius bishop of Cæsarea. The other persons and objects treated of were, Marcellus bishop of Ancyra in Galatia, Eustathius bishop of Antioch, Athanasius bishop of Alexandria, a dialogue against the Marcionites, Juvencus, Julius Firmicus Maternus, Cyril of Jerusalem, the Audians, Hilary of Poictiers, Aerius, the council of Laodicea, Epiphanius bishop in Cyprus, and the Apostolical Constitutions and Canons. In this volume, the two first articles are of peculiar importance. At the conclusion of the account of the council of Nice, are some admirable reflections on the conduct of that council, and on the pernicious effects of introducing subscriptions, authority, and force into the Christian church. In the history of Eusebius, which is very copious, we meet with a number of excellent observations concerning the divisions of the sacred books, the character of the writers of them, and the employment of the apostles, and apostolical men. With these bishop Secker was highly pleased; but he was not equally satisfied with what our author had advanced in relation to the council of Nice. The letter which his lordship wrote to Dr. Lardner upon the occasion, together with the doctor's answer,

answer, may be seen in the Appendix^a. Dr. Secker's letter marks the turn of his mind, and will furnish matter of reflection to the curious reader, who has a talent at discerning the nice discriminations of character.

In this same year, our author published a volume of sermons, the subjects of which are intirely of a practical nature. These sermons, as might be expected from Dr. Lardner, are very judicious and instructive, and the perusal of them cannot fail of being acceptable and useful to candid and serious Christians. Our author having presented these discourses, together with the eighth volume of the Credibility, to Dr. Doddridge, that gentleman wrote a letter of acknowledgment in return, which is inserted in the Appendix^c. Dr. Doddridge's letter is rather curious; partly as it displays something of the sentiments and disposition of that excellent man; and partly as it exhibits a small foible in his character, which was that of representing with too much parade the various employments and business wherein he was engaged.

Dr. Lardner, in 1751, resigned the office of morning preacher at Crouched Fryers. His reasons for this determination were, the continuance and even increase of his deafness, the smallness of the morning auditory, and the importance of redeeming time for carrying on his long work. Dr. Benson,

^a Appendix, N° VII.

^c Appendix, N° VIII.

whom

whom he had acquainted, by letter, with his purpose of resignation, wrote thus to him in return. “ I was so much affected, on Monday evening, upon reading your letter, that I had very little sleep that night; and my mind still remains greatly affected with the thoughts of parting with you. For though I cannot but own I feel the weight of your reasons, yet I must frankly tell you, I do not expect ever to have an assistant, in whom I can place so thorough a confidence, and for whom I can entertain so warm an affection, and so high an esteem. I thank you heartily for all your friendly, kind, and obliging treatment of me, especially since I came to Crouched Fryers; and I earnestly desire that our friendship may never be interrupted^f.

Our author, adhering to his resolution, preached his last sermon on the 23d of June; having been assistant at Crouched Fryers nearly twenty-two years. His farewell discourse was taken from 2 Cor. iv. 18. “ While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen; for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal.” These words afforded a fine subject for the conclusion of Dr. Lardner’s pious and faithful labours in the pulpit. In a letter written to him by a friend, in 1748, are some observations, concerning

^f Memoirs, ubi supra, p. 107.

his character as a preacher, and the cause of his not being generally acceptable, which it may not be amiss to transcribe. " It has often grieved me to see so few persons attend your public administrations, and puzzled me to assign a reason for it. " When I consider the simplicity, propriety, and purity of your language; the justness of your sentiments; the importance of the subjects you handle; the seriousness and solemnity that animates every part of your performances; that you never meddle with any of the disputable points that divide and alienate Protestants; nay, have treated even Popery itself in such a manner as shews you to be indeed an imitator of the meekness and gentleness of Christ; what can be the reason? I can think of none but this, that there is some little imperfection in your speech. Your voice is naturally strong, clear, and agreeable; but it is not difficult to perceive, in forming some sounds, that the organs of speech are weak. But I take this to be the least part of the defect; which, from long and careful observation, I think consists in two things, *viz.* Indistinctness, or slipping over now and then a word or syllable; or running them too close together, especially at the end of a sentence; and usually at the same time lowering your voice. This is most remarkable in your prayer, less so

" in

"in your sermon, and still less in your reading."

It is certain that Dr. Lardner's mode of elocution must have been very unpleasant. That, from his early and extreme deafness, he could have no such command of his voice, as to give it a due modulation, those who were personally acquainted with him well knew. When to this it is added, that he dropped his words greatly in the pulpit, it cannot be a matter of surprise that he was not popular. Some few judicious persons, who could raise their minds above all external advantages, admired him extremely: but such hearers can never be numerous.

The ninth volume of the second part of the *Credibility* appeared in 1752. In the preface to it our author assigns the reason why, with regard to a few names, he had been obliged to transgress the order of time. He was desirous that Ephrem the Syrian should be in the former volume; and the chapter was completed as far as it could be done from the Greek edition of his works at Oxford, and the first two volumes of the edition then begun at Rome. But Dr. Lardner having been informed that the remaining volumes of the Roman edition might be expected in a short time, he determined to wait for them; and they did not come to his hands till several months after the

* Ibid. p. 107—109.

publication

publication of the eighth volume. Ephrem being laid aside, he took Epiphanius; and the Apostolical Constitutions naturally followed, which requiring a long chapter, some other articles, of smaller consequence, were for the present excluded. The persons treated of in the ninth volume were, Rheticius bishop of Autun, Triphyllius, Fortunatianus, Photinus, Eusebius bishop of Vercelli, Lucifer bishop of Cagliari in Sardinia, Gregory bishop of Elvira, Phæbadius bishop of Agen, Caius Marius Victorinus Afer, Apollinarius bishop of Laodicea, Damasus bishop of Rome, Basil bishop of Cæsarea in Cappadocia, Gregory Nazianzen, Amphilochius bishop of Iconium, Gregory bishop of Nyssa in Cappadocia, Didymus of Alexandria, Ephrem the Syrian, Ebedjesu, Pacian bishop of Barcelona, Optatus of Milevi, Ambrose bishop of Milan, Diodorus bishop of Tarsus, Philaster bishop of Brescia, Gaudentius bishop of the same city, Sophronius, and Theodore bishop of Mopsuestia in Cilicia. There is, also, a long and curious chapter concerning the Priscillianists, and a shorter one, relative to a Commentary upon thirteen of St. Paul's epistles, inscribed by many to Hilary deacon of Rome. To this volume were subjoined, "Remarks upon Mr. Bower's Account of the Manichees, in the second volume of his History of the Popes." Mr. Bower had retailed the common calumnies with regard to these heretics, which are refuted by our author with his usual candour, good sense, and knowledge of antiquity.

quity. The remarks, in the present edition, are annexed to the history of the Manichees. In this year (1752) a second impression was called for of the Discourses on the Circumstances of the Jewish People.

The next year produced the tenth volume of the second part of the Credibility; in which the persons treated of are few in number, but very important with respect to their character, works, and testimony. They are Jerome, Rufinus, Augustin bishop of Hippo Regius in Africa, and John Chrysostom bishop of Constantinople. A short chapter is introduced, on the Third Council of Carthage. Two other publications came from Dr. Lardner in the same year. The first was, "A Dissertation upon the two Epistles ascribed to Clement of Rome, lately published by Mr. Wetstein; with large extracts out of them, and an argument showing them not to be genuine." At the close of this judicious and elaborate dissertation, our author has made some observations concerning the design of his great undertaking, which the reader will probably not be displeased with perusing. "When," says he, "tidings were first brought hither, that Mr. Wetstein had received two new epistles of Clement out of the East, several of my friends and readers signified their desire, that when they should be published, I would observe the testimony therein afforded

“ afforded to the books of the New Testament; “ which service I have now performed, according “ to my ability. They supposed it to be a ne- “ cessary part of the work, in which I have been “ long employed: which is not barely a bibli- “ theque of ecclesiastical authors, or memoirs of “ ecclesiastical history, but was begun, and has “ been carried on with a view of showing the “ truth of the Christian religion; particularly, “ the truth and credibility of the evangelical “ history, and the antiquity, genuineness, and “ authority of the books of the New Testament, “ the original records of the doctrine and mira- “ cles of our Saviour and his apostles. And all “ along great care has been taken, to distinguish “ genuine from supposititious writings; which I “ now reflect upon with much satisfaction. In “ this method, witnesses, when produced, appear “ in their true time and character; and every one “ is able to judge of the value of their testi- “ mony.”

The other production of Dr. Lardner, which came out in 1753, appeared without his name, and was intitled, “ An Essay on the Mosaic Account of “ the Creation and Fall of Man.” By the misfor- tunes of the bookseller, almost the whole impression was lost; so that, in the present edition, it has the recommendation of novelty. Our author adopts the literal sense of the history of our first parents, and, after having critically explained the nar- ration,

ration, deduces from it a variety of important observations.

Dr. Lardner was now drawing to the conclusion of the second part of the Credibility. In 1754, the eleventh volume of it was published, containing a succinct history of the principal Christian writers of the fifth, sixth, and following centuries, to the beginning of the twelfth century; with their testimony to the books of the New Testament. The persons introduced in this volume were more than forty in number, it not being necessary to make the articles so large and particular, as had been requisite at a more early period. An Appendix was added, giving an account of the ecclesiastical histories of Socrates, Sozomen, and Theodoret.

It had begun to be suggested, by some persons, that our author had carried down his testimonies lower than was needful to the purpose of his main argument. But such a suggestion was not the result of a due consideration of the matter. The Rev. Dr. Henry Miles of Tooting, an eminent dissenting minister, and a respectable member of the Royal Society, expressed his sentiments to Dr. Lardner upon the subject in so judicious a manner, after reading the eleventh volume, that they well deserve to be inserted. “I thank God,” says he, “who has enabled you to finish your “design in a collection of ancient testimonies, &c. “for the service of the Christian cause; the benefit

" of which the present generation and future ages
" will reap. The more I consider the characters
" of the writers, cited by you, in the former, and
" this volume, the more am I satisfied you did
" right to bring your work down so far as you have
" done. Those who have been, or are otherwise
" minded, do not seem to me to have well con-
" sidered the distance of time at which we are re-
" moved from the period to which your last
" volume reacheth; nor how far it was necessary
" to preclude the cavils and exceptions, which our
" enemies, and their successors, may be ready to
" make to the truths of the gospel history: nor is
" it considered, *that the distance will be continually*
" *growing*. For my part (setting aside the consi-
" deration of your principal view) I cannot help
" looking upon it as a very useful and desirable un-
" dertaking, if we regard it as a branch of ecclesi-
" astical history; of which we have nothing in our
" language that can render it unnecessary; and
" moreover, if we consider it as containing a va-
" riety of important instructions, which no careful
" reader can overlook, in the characters and con-
" duct of the writers, mentioned by you. Sure I
" am, this lesson all may naturally be taught; how
" absolutely necessary it is for us to regard the
" inspired writings as the rule of our faith and
" practice, and not the dictates or conduct of falli-
" ble men in former or later ages^h."

^h Memoirs, ubi supra, p. 110, 111.

As such a quantity and variety of matter were comprehended in our author's great work, an epitome of it became very desirable, to assist the recollection of the memory, and to display in one view the force of the argument. Accordingly, this was undertaken by Dr. Lardner himself, who, in the twelfth and last volume of the second part, which was published in 1755, gave a general review of his design, and an admirable recapitulation of the eleven preceding volumes, with some new additional observations. Lists were added, of various readings, and of texts explained; together with an alphabetical catalogue of Christian authors, sects, and writings, and an alphabetical table of principal matters.

About this time, Dr. Lardner, in conjunction with Dr. Chandler, Dr. John Ward, and the Rev. Mr. Edward Sandercock, was engaged in perusing, and preparing for the press, some posthumous dissertations of the Rev. Mr. Moses Lowman, a learned dissenting minister at Clapham. Various works were written by this gentleman, among which three have been held in considerable esteem by the public. These are, a Treatise on the Civil Government of the Hebrews, another on the Ritual of that people, and a Commentary on the Revelations. He wrote also a short piece, drawn up in the mathematical form, to prove the being and perfections of God by the argument a priori. Dr. Chandler, in his funeral sermon for Mr. Lowman, asserted that it was an absolute demonstration. Perhaps it came as

near

near to it as any thing that has been written upon the subject: but I dare not pronounce that there is no flaw in the reasoning, or that it will produce undeniable conviction. It was as an author that Mr. Lowman excelled, and not as a preacher. His discourses in the pulpit were so obscure, that a gentleman of great intelligence, one of his congregation, said he could never understand him.

Early in the spring of the year 1756, I had the happiness of commencing an acquaintance with Dr. Lardner, and the honour of its being sought for on his side, in consequence of the favourable opinion which his candour had led him to form of me, from the first sermon I ever printed, on the advantages of religious knowledge. In the same year, the doctor published the first and second volumes of the Supplement to the Credibility of the Gospel History. It fell to my lot to be the Monthly reviewer of these volumes; and the accounts which I gave of them were so fortunate as to obtain our author's approbation. He did not know, at the time, from whom they came. To what circumstance it was owing that the review of the work was configned to me, I cannot now recollect, it not being till long after, that I could with any justice have been deemed a periodical critic. When the third volume of the Supplement appeared, which was in 1757, Dr. Lardner himself drew up a short and simple state of the contents of it, which was inserted in the Review, with a slight addition

by way of encomium; for nothing that had the least tendency to praise came from his own pen.

The first volume of the Supplement contained general observations upon the canon of the New Testament, and a History of the Four Evangelists, with the Evidences of the Genuineness of the Four Gospels, and the Acts of the Apostles, and an Examination of the Times in which these books were written. There is, likewise, a chapter concerning the time when the Apostles left Judea, to go and preach the Christian religion to other countries; which event, our author thinks, could not have taken place until after the council at Jerusalem. He concluded the volume with a discussion of the question, Whether any one of the first three Evangelists had seen the gospel of the others before he wrote his own? and here Dr. Lardner hath determined, with great appearance of reason and argument, that St. Matthew, St. Mark, and St. Luke, did not abridge or transcribe from each other, but are distinct, independent, and harmonious witnesses. The second volume comprehended the history of St. Paul, displayed the evidences of the genuineness of his fourteen Epistles, particularly that to the Hebrews, and ascertained the times in which they were written. Through the whole were interspersed many curious remarks; and the two concluding chapters were employed in shewing, that the epistle inscribed to the Ephesians was actually addressed to them, and that the churches

churches of Colosse and Laodicea were planted by St. Paul. In the third volume the seven Catholic Epistles, and the Revelation of St. John, were considered, and histories given of St. James, St. Peter, and St. Jude. The order of the books of the New Testament is examined, and proofs afforded that they were early known, read, and made use of by Christians. In conclusion, it is shewn, that there is no reason to believe that any of the sacred books of the New Testament have been lost.

It would not be easy to say too much in praise of the Supplement to the Credibility. The several questions discussed in this work are determined in consequence of a depth of investigation, and an accuracy of judgment, which are highly worthy of admiration. It is remarkable, that in various points the opinions of our author are very different from those which his former colleague, Dr. Benson, maintained, in his History of the Acts of the Apostles, the prefaces to his Paraphrases, and the dissertations annexed to them. True criticism, we believe, will usually decide in favour of Dr. Lardner.

I cannot avoid strongly recommending the Supplement to the Credibility to the attention of all young divines. Indeed, I think that it ought to be read by every theological student before he quits the university or academy in which he is educated. There are three other works which will be found of eminent advantage to those who are intended for, or beginning to engage in the Christian ministry.

These are, Butler's Analogy, Bishop Law's Considerations on the Theory of Religion, and Dr. Taylor's Key to the Apostolical Writings, prefixed to his paraphrase on the epistle to the Romans. Without agreeing with every circumstance advanced in these works, it may be said of them, with the greatest truth, that they tend to open and enlarge the mind; that they give important views of the evidence, nature, and design of revelation; and that they display a vein of reasoning and enquiry which may be extended to other objects besides those immediately considered in the books themselves.

It must not be forgotten, that the Supplement to the Credibility has a place in the excellent collection of treatises in divinity which has lately been published by Dr. Watson bishop of Landaff. For a collection which cannot fail of being eminently conducive to the instruction and improvement of younger clergymen, and for the noble, manly, and truly evangelical preface by which it is preceded, this great prelate is entitled to the gratitude of the Christian world.

May I not be permitted to add, that there is another collection which is still wanted; and that is, of curious and valuable small tracts, relative to the evidences of our holy religion, or to scriptural difficulties, which, by length of time, and in consequence of having been separately printed, are almost sunk into oblivion, or, if remembered, can scarcely

scarcely at any rate be procured ? The recovery of such pieces, and the communication of them to the public, in a few volumes, and at a reasonable price, would be an acceptable, as well as an useful service to men of enquiry and literature.

The Supplement to the Credibility of the Gospel History completed one grand part of Dr. Lardner's design, which was, to produce, at large, the testimonies of Christian writers to the books of the New Testament. What he had already executed had employed him thirty-three years; and it was contrary to his expectation that his life was spared to the accomplishment of so much of the eminently important scheme which he had in view. Providence, however, preserved him for still farther usefulness. There was one part of his plan which he never carried into effect. It was his intention to allege the testimonies of Christian writers, not only to the books, but also to the principal facts of the New Testament, such as the birth, miracles, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ, the mission of the Apostles, and the miracles wrought by them: to which were to be added such considerations as might give weight to these testimonies, and confirm their truth. This our author designed to be the second book of the second part of the Credibility, and he supposed that it might be comprised in a single octavo volume; on which account it is rather the more surprizing that it was not completed. Perhaps, upon reflec-

tion, he might judge, that almost every thing which he wished to say in this respect, would be found in the volumes already published.

This year (1757) Dr. Lardner, in conjunction with the Rev. Mr. Caleb Fleming, revised for publication, and introduced with a preface, a posthumous tract of Mr. Thomas Moore, intitled, “An Enquiry into the Nature of our Saviour’s Agony in the Garden.” Mr. Moore was a woollen-draper, in Holywell Street, near the Strand, a thinking man, and studious in the scriptures. The design of his pamphlet was to account for our Lord’s agony, from the series of events which befell him during the latter part of his ministry, without supposing it to have been the result of any præternatural inflictions.

In the year 1758, appeared two productions from the pen of our author. The first was, “The Case of the Demoniacs, mentioned in the New Testament; being four discourses upon Mark v. 19, with an Appendix for the farther illustration of the subject.” Dr. Lardner, in this work, maintains the hypothesis which was supported by Mr. Joseph Mede in the last century, by Dr. Sykes and others in the present, and still more recently, in a very elaborate manner, by the late Rev. Hugh Farmer. This scheme, which supposes the demoniacs to have been only diseased or lunatic persons, and not actually possessed by evil spirits, seems to gain ground; and will probably be found

to be most agreeable, not only to the principles of sound philosophy, but to the genuine language of antiquity and scripture, when rightly understood. The Treatise on the Demoniacs having been considered by our author as an appendix to the first part of his Credibility, relative to the facts occasionally mentioned in the New Testament, it is subjoined to that work in the present edition.

The other publication of Dr. Lardner's this year, was a short one, without his name, the title of which was, "A Letter to Jonas Hanway, Esq; in which some reasons are assigned, why houses for the reception of penitent women, who have been disorderly in their lives, ought not to be called Magdalen Houses." Mary Magdalen, as our author shews, was not the sinner who is recorded in the seventh chapter of St. Luke, but a woman of distinction and excellent character, who for a while laboured under some bodily indisposition, which our Lord miraculously healed. To call, therefore, a hospital for repenting prostitutes a Magdalen-house was, he thought, a great abuse of the name of a truly honourable and valuable woman. If Mary's shame had been manifest, and upon record, she could not have been worse stigmatized. Such was the delicacy of Dr. Lardner's mind, that, independently of the case of Mary Magdalen, he disliked the use of the word "prostitutes" in the title of a place of reception for females who had been of bad characters. Speaking

ing of a proper inscription, he says, “ I shall propose one, which is very plain : *A Charity House for Penitent Women*: which, I think, sufficiently indicates their fault; and yet is, at the same time, expressive of tenderness, by avoiding a word of offensive sound and meaning, denoting the lowest disgrace that human nature can fall into, and which few modest men and women can think of without pain and uneasiness. Or, if that title is not reckoned distinct and particular enough, with a small alteration it may be made, ‘ for penitent Harlots’.” The letter to Mr. Hanway produced no effect; and perhaps it came too late. Besides, though the highest regard ought ever to be paid to the memory of that gentleman, as a most excellent and philanthropic citizen, he was not, I believe, easily disengaged from what he had once adopted.

In 1759, Dr. Lardner published, but without his name, “ A Letter written in the year 1730, concerning the question, Whether the Logos supplied the place of a human soul in the person of Jesus Christ.” To this letter, which I have mentioned before, and which is supposed to have been originally addressed to Lord Barrington, were now added “ two Postscripts: the first, containing an Explication of these words, the Spirit, the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of God, as used in

ⁱ Volume of Tracts, p. 264.

“ the

"the scriptures : the second, containing Remarks
"upon the third part of the late Bishop of
"Clogher's Vindication of the Histories of the Old
"and New Testament." In this treatise, our
author opposes the Arian hypothesis, to which he
acknowledges that he had once, for a while, been
much inclined, but which he now entirely disliked,
thinking it to be all amazing throughout, and ir-
reconcileable to reason. The point which he
labours to prove is, that Jesus is a man appointed,
anointed, beloved, honoured and exalted by God
above all other beings. It is observable, that
Dr. Lardner did not derive his opinions upon this
subject from the study of the Socinian authors.
"I have not," says he, "been greatly conversant
"with the writers of that denomination. I have
"never read Crellius de uno Deo Patre; though
"I believe it to be a very good book. There is
"also, in our own language, a collection of Unitar-
"ian tracts, in two or three quartos. But I am
"not acquainted with it, nor can I remember that
"I ever looked into it. I have formed my senti-
"ments upon the scriptures, and by reading such
"commentators, chiefly, as are in the best repute.
"I may add, that the reading of the ancient
"writers of the church has been of use to confirm
"me, and to assist in clearing up difficulties*." In
the preface, our author declares, that though he is

* Ibid. p. 83, 84, 112.

not without a just concern for such things as appear to him to be of importance, he hopes, the whole is written in the way of reason and argument, with meekness and candour, without acrimony and abuse. The truth of this declaration will not be denied by those who disagree the most with Dr. Lardner; and surely it is not saying too much to add, that he has displayed great knowledge of scripture, and of scriptural phraseology. His intimate friend Mr. Hallet did not adopt his opinion; and several letters were exchanged between them on the subject. Their different views with regard to what they apprehended to be divine truth, did not, however, produce the least diminution in their mutual affection. One of Mr. Hallet's letters was concluded in terms which reflect honour on his character. “The consideration of these matters,” says he, “is so far from lessening my friendship and regard for you, that I reverence and esteem you more than ever; and you shall never find me say one word inconsistent with the highest respect and friendship.—May God long preserve your usefulness!”

I do not recollect that the letter on the Logos made any great impression, at the time of its first publication. The sentiments advanced in it were then confined to a few persons; and others were not readily disposed to embrace them. It is not

¹ Memoirs, ubi supra, p. 113.

necessary to inform my readers, that a period of less than thirty years has produced a surprising alteration in this respect. The fact is equally allowed by those who rejoice in, and by those who deplore the progress of Socinianism. What are the doctrines of the New Testament, with regard to the person and præ-existence of Christ, is the grand controversy of the day ; a controversy that is warmly agitated, and which is not likely to be soon brought to a conclusion. Were I to indulge to the observations which arise in my mind on this occasion, I should be led into a digression incompatible with my present undertaking. If Providence should spare my life, it is my wish, when certain pressing engagements are discharged, to impart to the public a few candid reflections on some late, and indeed still subsisting theological disputes. I cannot, however, dismiss the subject, without remarking the coincidence of opinion which sometimes takes place between persons extremely different in their religious professions and connections. The celebrated Father le Courayer, author of the Dissertation on the Validity of English Ordinations, continued to the end of his life in the communion of the Roman Catholic church. Nevertheless, in the declaration of his last sentiments on the doctrines of religion, recently published, he has delivered such views of things respecting the Trinity, as Dr. Lardner himself must have highly approved.

proved. The passage is so striking, and breathes so liberal a spirit, that I shall insert it below^m.

A second

^m The doctrine of the Unity of God, so true, and so evident, has served for a pretext to many, to try to inspire aversion at Christianity, as if it affected this truth by its doctrines of the Trinity, and the Incarnation. The writings of some of the fathers, and the wretched philosophy of the schools, may, in fact, have given ground to some people to draw such a consequence: but there is nothing in the gospel which does not tend, on the contrary, to confirm us more and more in the knowledge and worship of one God; and nothing is less opposite to this truth than the doctrines which are thought to destroy it effectually.

Of all the modes of explaining the doctrine of the Trinity, I know of none more contrary to the true doctrine of Christianity, than that which supposes in the Deity an existence of three substances distinct, however collateral, however subordinate. It is, in my apprehension, to re-establish Polytheism, under the pretext of explaining a mystery. The unity of God, is the foundation of the gospel; and every thing that may in any way affect this truth is dangerous. As Jesus Christ and his apostles have laboured, on the one hand, to reclaim the Gentiles from the belief and from the worship of many gods, and have supposed, on the other hand, that the Jews thought soundly in the article of Deity, in which they never distinguished different substances; it seems to me a departure from the simplicity of the gospel, and a voluntary inclination to corrupt the idea of a clear truth, by singular explications, which it becomes necessary to abuse at least, in order to combat.

I believe, therefore, that there is but only one God; that his Spirit is not a substance distinct from him; and that Jesus Christ, to whom divinity was very intimately united, is his Son in virtue of that union. This is all the Trinity that I find in the gospel; and I cannot conceive that any other Trinity can accord with the Unity of God. I know that many ancient writers have had recourse to the multiplication of substances, to give us an

idea

A second volume of Sermons, on various subjects, was published by our author in 1760. The discourses in this volume, though always applied to

idea of this mystery ; and others have imagined other systems, more philosophical than evangelical, that have less served to clear up this matter than to obscure it. But I distinguish these systems from that of the gospel : and, inasmuch as I find this last worthy of respect, it therefore appears to me little essential to adopt notions which often have much obscurity, and sometimes are even involved in contradiction.

The Incarnation has nothing any more contrary to the doctrine of the Unity of God, than the Trinity. Accordingly, it is extremely remarkable, that neither Jesus Christ nor his apostles have ever represented to us these mysteries as including incomprehensible things, and which it was impossible to reconcile to reason. God, willing to draw men from their errors and to purify them from their sins, filled Jesus Christ with his wisdom, invested him with his power, communicated to him his authority, and gave him his Spirit ^a, not by measure, as to the prophets, but united himself so intimately with him, that Jesus Christ appeared in the form of God ^b; that he was made Lord and Christ ^c; Prince and Saviour ^d; that he was filled with wisdom and with grace ^e; that all the fullness of the godhead resided corporally in him ^f; and that he received the glory, the honour, the virtue, the strength, and the blessing, of his Father ^g; who, by the participation which he gave him of his power and authority, made him enter, at the same time, into a participation of his glory, in such a manner, that he who honours the Son honours the Father who sent him ^h. Thus God, referring always every thing to himself, and not terminating in Jesus Christ, who is no otherwise regarded than as the organ and the instrument of

^a John iii. 34. ^b Phil. ii. 6. ^c Acts ii. 36. ^d Acts v. 31.
^e Luke ii. 40. ^f Coloss. ii. 9. ^g Apoc. v. 12. ^h John v. 23.

the

to practical purposes, are more curious and critical than those which he gave to the world ten years before. Several important circumstances, relative
to

the mercy of his Father, is always God alone, who is the object of our adorations ; and there is nothing that shocks us in conceiving, that He can communicate himself to a man as fully, and as intimately, as he judges it necessary for his own glory, and for the salvation of mankind.

This is the explication of that intimate union of divinity with humanity in Jesus Christ, which, perfectly simple as it is, has so much divided all Christendom. From a willingness to find, in this intimate union of divinity with humanity in Jesus Christ, all that we experience in the union of the body and the soul, we have been thrown into embarrassments and contradictions, which it is impossible either to explain or to conciliate. We talk of hypostases, of personalities, of idioms, and of every thing that a dark philosophy could imagine, to render things credible, of which it was unable to give us any notion. Some have made a ridiculous mixture of the divinity with the humanity. Others, in discriminating too nicely the difference, have seemed to place Jesus Christ only in the rank of ordinary prophets. Hence the Nestorianism, the Eutychianism, the Apollinarism, and the Monothelitism, which have excited such fatal schisms in the church, and which have, perhaps, as much favoured the progress of Mahometanism in the East, as the ignorance of these nations, and the victorious arms of the Saracens.

To avoid these excesses, we must abide in the simplicity of the gospel, and content ourselves with acknowledging, that God, to bring the world back to his knowledge, and to his worship, gave birth to Jesus Christ in a miraculous manner, and united Himself to him in a way the most close and intimate, so that it might be said, that Jesus Christ was in Godⁱ, and God in him ; that all that appertained to the Father^k was in the disposition of the

ⁱ John x. 38.

^k John xvii. 7. 10.

to the history of our Saviour, and the doctrines of the gospel, are considered and explained ; and it would not be easy to find, in the same compass, a greater treasure of Christian knowledge. This year

Son, by the communication which the Father had given him of His power ; that he had resigned all judgment to him¹ ; that, as the Father could raise the dead to life, the Son could do so also^m ; that the doctrine of Jesus Christ was not his own, but that of his Father who sent himⁿ ; that he was only the same thing with him^o ; that it was the Father who abode in him, and who did all his works^p ; in one word, that he was the Son of God^q, because that God, on sending him into the world, had sanctified him to such a degree, that he who saw him^r, saw his Father, and that he who believed in him, believed also in God.

When one has once acknowledged the truth and the holiness of the gospel, all this doctrine concerning the person of Jesus Christ appears to me so simple, that I cannot conceive how it was possible to corrupt it by so many explications, which are good for nothing, but to make Christianity appear less reasonable, and full of contradictions. In consequence of a continual desire to find new mysteries, an infinitude of imaginations have been consecrated ; and it is still more lamentable, that these imaginations are become a part of religion, by the authority of some, and by the acquiescence of others ; so that a man passes for an unbeliever, or an irreligious person, if he does not subscribe to the predominant system, and if he happens to have too much understanding to submit to received prejudices, or too much fortitude to be overawed by violence.

It is not so much the person of Jesus Christ, as his doctrine, that is the object of the Christian religion ; and though we ought to honour the Son as we honour the Father, because he had his mission, and was cloathed with his authority, it is, how-

¹ John v. 22.

^m John v. 21.

ⁿ John vii. 16.

^o John x. 30.

^p John xiv. 10.

^q John x. 36.

^r John xi. 44, 45.

year a second edition was demanded of the eleventh volume of the Credibility, and of the two first volumes of the Supplement. The fifth volume had been reprinted in 1756, and the fourth and sixth in 1758.

Deeply engaged as Dr. Lardner was, in preparing his own works for the press, he could not resist the solicitations which were made to him to revise occasionally the productions of other persons. About this time, at the request of his friend, Mr. Caleb Fleming, he corrected the manuscript of "A Criticism upon modern notions of "Sacrifices; being an Examination of Dr. Taylor's Scripture Doctrine of the Atonement examined." The author of the tract here mentioned, was a Dr. Richie, a physician, and a dissenting minister, somewhere in the north of England. By the same gentleman was afterwards published, in two volumes, quarto, an elaborate work, concerning the peculiar doctrines of revelation, relating to piacular sacrifices, redemption by Christ, and the treatment of moral characters by the Deity. It was the production of a man who had applied himself diligently to the study of the scriptures,

ever, to God only that Jesus Christ reclaims our attention; and he assumes no other consequence to recommend himself to the Jews, than as having been sanctified by his Father, to come and announce his doctrine, and to instruct us in truths unknown to the Gentiles, and very much altered by the Jews.—Le Courrayer's "Declaration of his last Sentiments on the different Doctrines of Religion." The English translation, p. 14—26.

and

and who has taken immense pains to ascertain his own views of things ; notwithstanding which, it is now little known, and still less read. The different fate of books would furnish matter for a curious and a copious disquisition.

Another work, the manuscript of which Dr. Lardner revised, at the desire of the writer, for whom he had a particular esteem, was a Treatise on the true Doctrine of the New Testament concerning Jesus Christ. This treatise, which has come to a second impression, was the composition of the Rev. Mr. Paul Cardale, a dissenting minister at Evesham, in Worcestershire. It is introduced by a long discourse on free enquiry in matters of religion, and contains a full defence of what is called the Socinian scheme. I believe that it has been of some considerable influence in drawing over persons to the author's opinion. Mr. Cardale, I remember, is very large in endeavouring to shew, that the great blessings of the gospel do not depend upon the question concerning our Lord's præ-existence; and that no stress is laid upon it, in the account which is given in the New Testament of the benefits we derive from our divine master. A sentiment which I should earnestly wish to be generally impressed, is, that the glory of our holy religion stands firm on every scheme. Writers are apt to express themselves, as if the Christian revelation would be of little value, unless their particular systems are adopted : but this is a kind of language

which is extremely injudicious, and which ought to be avoided and discouraged. The apostle St. Paul, speaking of Jesus Christ, saith: “ Who of “ God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, “ and sanctification, and redemption ”. To this account of things every Christian, of every denomination, gives a most ready and cordial assent. But can any man be said to think meanly of the evangelical dispensation, or to detract from its excellence and dignity, who believes that God is the author of it, that it was communicated by Jesus Christ, and that he conveys to us knowledge, pardon, holiness, and eternal life ? These are blessings of unspeakable importance ; blessings which render the gospel a pearl of invaluable price : and as such it will be esteemed by all who assent to its truth and divine authority, whatever sentiments they may embrace concerning matters of more doubtful disputation.

In 1761, and 1762, Dr. Lardner condescended to make some communications to a periodical work, then carrying on, intitled, “ The Library,” which consisted entirely of original pieces, and was conducted by some of the younger dissenting ministers of the city of London. His papers, which were four in number, are inserted at the end of the volume of tracts, in the present collection. A new edition of the tenth volume of the second part of

* 1 Corinth. i. 30.

the Credibility came out in 1761, and of the twelfth volume in 1762. Not again to resume the subject, it may here be mentioned, that the eighth volume was reprinted in 1766.

It was in 1762 that our author published his "Remarks on the late Dr. Ward's Dissertations on several Passages of the sacred Scriptures; wherein are shewn, beside other Things, that St. John computed the Hours of the Day after the Jewish Manner; who are the Greeks, John xii; who the Grecians, Acts vi; the Design of the apostolic Decree, Acts xv; that there was but one Sort of Jewish Proselytes; wherein lay the Fault of St. Peter; and how St. Paul may be vindicated." Of these Remarks it is sufficient to say, that they display Dr. Lardner's usual skill in whatever relates to the critical Knowledge of the New Testament. He has particularly confuted the notion of two kinds of proselytes, which had not only been adopted by Dr. Ward, but which, for some time before, had been a favourite opinion with Lord Barrington, Dr. Benson, and other writers, so as to lead them into various mistakes. A long intimacy had subsisted between Dr. Ward and our author; and accordingly, throughout the whole of his Remarks, he has treated the memory of his friend with the greatest regard and respect.

Dr. Lardner, in 1764, communicated to the world, without his name, some strictures on an-

other eminent New Testament critic, Dr. James Macknight, who had recently published his Harmony of the Four Gospels. The arrangement of the circumstances relative to our Lord's resurrection, had for several years engaged the attention of Christian writers. Mr. Gilbert West had treated the subject very much at large, and was supposed to have thrown great light upon it, by having recourse to a different interpretation of some of our Saviour's appearances, recorded by the Evangelists, from what had hitherto been given. A new vein of criticism was opened by him, which was pursued by other persons. Dr. Macknight, in particular, bestowed extraordinary labour upon the matter, in the conclusion of his Harmony. The efforts of his ingenuity and diligence had not the good fortune to satisfy Dr. Lardner. It appeared to him, that certain suppositions, which had been made by Dr. Macknight, were altogether without foundation. He thought proper, therefore, to publish, in a letter to the author, Observations upon his Harmony, so far as related to the History of our Saviour's Resurrection. It cannot be denied that this tract is a piece of masterly criticism. The account which is given in it, of the various appearances of our Lord, after his resurrection, comes recommended by such a simplicity of truth, as calls for the warmest approbation. I have reason to believe, that there were other points in which Dr. Lardner did not agree with Dr. Macknight. In

matters

matters liable to difficulty, and involved in some degree of obscurity, a diversity of sentiments will take place between the most upright, able, and serious enquirers after truth.

Amidst these various productions of a smaller nature, Dr. Lardner continued the prosecution of his grand object. Accordingly, soon after the publication of his Observations on Dr. Macknight's Harmony, and in the same year, he gave to the world, in quarto, the first volume of "A large Collection of ancient Jewish and Heathen Testimonies to the Truth of the Christian Religion." This volume contained the Jewish testimonies, and the testimonies of heathen authors of the first century. In the preface, Dr. Lardner has given an account of those who had gone before him in the same design; from which account it will appear, that the subject, comparatively speaking, had hitherto been but imperfectly considered. As he was apprehensive that his work might be charged with prolixity, he has made an apology for it, which must effectually silence every objector. "I aim," says he, "to be distinct and particular. These things have already been slightly touched upon by many. I propose to enlarge, and set them in a fuller light. I allege passages of ancient authors at length: I settle their time: I distinguish their works, and endeavour to shew the value of their testimonies. I intend likewise to allege the judgments of divers learned moderns, who have gone before me

" in this service. All the persecutions of this
" time are a part of my subject, as they were ap-
" pointed by edicts of heathen emperors, and were
" carried on by heathen governors of provinces,
" and officers under them. I shall have an op-
" portunity to shew the patience and fortitude
" of the primitive Christians, and the state of
" Judaism, Gentilism, and Christianity, in the
" first four centuries. As most of the authors to
" be quoted by me are men of great distinction in
" the republic of letters, some occasions will of-
" fer for critical observations, which cannot be all
" declined : but nice and intricate questions will
" be carefully avoided, that the whole may be
" upon the level with the capacities of all who
" are inquisitive, and dispos'd to read with atten-
" tion." Such is our author's representation of his
purposes ; and it will be almost deemed superfluous
to add, that they are executed with the greatest
accuracy, learning, candour, and judgment.

The heathen testimonies, considered in the first volume, were, the pretended Epistle of Abgarus king of Edesſa to Jesus, and the Rescript of Jesus to Abgarus ; the knowledge which the Emperor Tiberius had of our Saviour Jesus Christ ; a monumental inscription concerning the Christians in the time of Nero ; Pliny the elder ; Tacitus ; Martial ; Juvenal ; and Suetonius. But this volume began with, and was chiefly employed upon, the Jewish testimonies ; among which the famous historian Josephus is the principal object. The third chapter,

chapter, relative to the fulfilment of our Saviour's predictions concerning the destruction of the temple and the city of Jerusalem, and the miseries of the Jewish people, is of peculiar importance; and accordingly, it has justly obtained a place in Bishop Watson's collection. It was a necessary part of Dr. Lardner's plan, to examine the celebrated passage with regard to the Lord Jesus Christ, which is now found in all the copies of Josephus. This passage, therefore, our author has discussed with his usual sagacity and diligence; and he has pronounced it to be an interpolation. Dr. Samuel Chandler, who was not convinced by what he had advanced upon the subject, wrote to him a letter on the occasion, to which he returned a short answer. The letter and the reply may be seen in the Appendix^o. Several learned writers among us were disposed, about this time, to maintain the authenticity of the passage in question. Dr. Chapman had done it in his Eusebius. The same cause had been defended by Dr. Nathaniel Foster, in a dissertation published at Oxford, in 1749. Nor is it without very eminent support in the present day. Mr. Bryant has exerted all the efforts, in vindication of the passage, which ingenuity and literature could supply: he has done every thing but producing conviction. I have been favoured with a letter from the Rev. Mr. Henley, of Rendlesham in

^o Appendix, N^o IX.

Suffolk, containing a communication from the Abbé de Voisin, and some observations by the late Abbé Bullet, relative to the testimony of Josephus, which I insert with great pleasure in the Appendix^p.

Without taking it upon me to decide concerning the authenticity of this famous passage, I must be permitted to remark, that it can never be of any real advantage in a controversy with the enemies of our holy religion. Of what avail can it be, to produce a testimony so doubtful in itself, and which some of the ablest advocates for the truth of the gospel reject as an interpolation? An Infidel must revolt at such an argument. It ought, therefore, to be for ever discarded from any place among the evidences of Christianity, though it may continue to exercise the ingenuity and critical skill of scholars and divines.

The second volume of the Collection of Jewish and Heathen Testimonies appeared in 1765; containing the heathen testimonies of the second century. In the preface to this volume, some farther observations were made upon the paragraph in the works of Josephus, concerning our blessed Saviour. Dr. Foster's dissertation, and Dr. Chandler's private letter, furnished the occasion for these additional observations; in which our author strenuously defends his former opinion. The persons treated of in

^p Appendix, N^o X.

this volume are, Pliny the younger, and Trajan ; Epictetus the stoic philosopher, and Arrian ; the Emperor Adrian ; Brutius Præsens ; Phlegon, Thallus, and Dionysius the Areopagite ; the Emperor Titus Antoninus the pious ; the Emperor Marcus Antoninus the philosopher ; Apuleius ; the early adversaries of Christianity, and particularly Celsus ; Lucian of Samosata ; Aristides the sophist ; Dion Chrysostom ; and Galen. Of the chapters relative to these persons, the longest, and the most important, are those concerning Pliny, Marcus Antoninus, and Celsus. Whoever peruses them, will find in them a noble treasure of curious and valuable information. I cannot forbear transcribing a short passage, from the article on Pliny and Trajan, which beautifully displays the candid mind of Dr. Lardner. The evidence before him had obliged him to say some things that are unfavourable to Trajan's character ; after which he adds : “ It ought “ not to be thought by any that I take pleasure in “ detracting from the merit of those who have “ been distinguished by their high stations, or their “ eminent abilities, or their useful services to man- “ kind of any sort. For indeed, the disadvan- “ tageous part of this detail has been made, and “ carried on, not without great reluctance, much “ diffidence, and tenderness ; whilst commendable “ things have been cheerfully acknowledged. And “ if we now think, and judge, and act, better than “ many in former times, it is owing to our superior

*

“ advantages ;

“advantages; such especially as we have received
“from the Christian Revelation, by which our
“minds have been enlightened and enlarged: for
“which we ought to be ever thankful, still
“thinking modestly of ourselves, and giving God
“the glory of all⁹. ”

The third volume of the Collection of Testimonies was published in 1766, containing an account of the Heathen writers and writings of the third century, whence arguments may be deduced in support of the truth of the Christian religion. This volume, which extended to the conversion of Constantine the great, abounded, like the two former ones, with much valuable information. The persecutions to which the professors of the gospel were exposed, and particularly that under the emperor Dioclesian, are here amply considered. A peculiar attention is, likewise, paid to Porphyry, and to his objections against the authenticity of the book of Daniel. In the chapter that relates to Diogenes Laertius, our author has introduced a very curious Criticism on the Altar to the Unknown God, at Athens, which is mentioned in the Acts of the Apostles.

The fourth volume of the Testimonies appeared in 1767. In this volume were contained the testimonies of Heathen writers of the fourth, fifth, and sixth centuries; to which was added, the state of Gentilism under Christian emperors.

⁹ See the present edition of Dr. Lardner's works, vol. vii, p. 337, 338.

Among the persons who here passed in review before Dr. Lardner, Julian, Ammianus Marcellinus, and Libanius are particularly distinguished. The accounts of these, and of contemporary authors, are very entertaining; though, as witnesses in favour of our holy religion, they are not so important as Celsus, and other writers of an earlier period. Nevertheless, they deserved to be collected, and to be put together in their proper order. Hence our author had an opportunity of displaying the last struggles of expiring Gentilism, and of relating some attempts to restore it, after it had been for a while exploded with scorn and disdain. He has, likewise, introduced to the acquaintance of his readers, not a few men of great learning, and fine abilities, who were still tenacious of the ancient rites, and fond of all the fables upon which they were founded, and by which they had long been upheld and encouraged.

In the copious article concerning Julian, a very important point came under Dr. Lardner's consideration, which was, the account of that emperor's attempt to rebuild the Temple at Jerusalem, and of the defeat of the attempt, by a divine and miraculous interposition. This account has been given not only by three contemporary Christian writers, Gregory Nazianzen, Chrysostom, and Ambrose, but also by the Heathen historian Ammianus Marcellinus. It is mentioned, likewise, by Rufinus, So-

crates,

crates, Sozomen, Theodoret, and other ancient authors. Accordingly, the story has obtained an almost universal credit; and scarcely any learned man had dared to suggest a doubt concerning it, excepting Basnage, in his History of the Jews. It is well known that Bishop Warburton wrote a very elaborate treatise in defence of the miracle; and that this treatise has been esteemed one of his capital productions, in point of judgment, as well as of literature. Dr. Lardner, however, after the fullest examination, was obliged to hesitate upon the subject. His difficulties he has stated with his usual simplicity and candour; and it must be acknowledged that the considerations proposed by him have great weight. Perhaps many who read them will be induced, for the future, to lay but little stress upon a narration, which has heretofore been so generally admitted. I need not say that our author had no intention to weaken the evidences of Revelation. He was influenced by nothing but that sacred and impartial regard to truth which he maintained in all his enquiries. Some of the reflections which occur in his criticism will probably here be read with pleasure, as they finely display the temper of his mind. "Let not any be offended," says he, "that I hesitate about this point. I think we ought not too easily to receive accounts of miraculous interpolations, which are not becoming the Divine Being. There are many things said of Julian,
" which

“ which all wise and good men do not believe.—
“ The truth of history is not at all affected by re-
“ jecting improbable relations. Nor is the cause
“ of Christianity at all hurt by our refusing to
“ assent to some things, which Christian writers
“ have said of Julian. That he pretended favour
“ for the Jews, and sometimes talked of rebuilding
“ their city and their temple, is allowed. But
“ that he actually attempted it, and ordered money
“ for the work out of the public treasury, when he
“ was setting out upon the Persian expedition, and
“ that his attempt was frustrated by many miracu-
“ lous interpositions, is not so certain. Though
“ these things should be contested or denied, it
“ can be of no bad consequence. Other histories,
“ which are void of the like improbabilities, are
“ not affected by it. And the Evangelical history
“ remains firm and inviolate, having in it all possible
“ marks of truth and credibility.

“ Finally, to put an end to these critical observa-
“ tions. Julian’s favourable regards for the Jewish
“ people, and his intention (or desire at least) to re-
“ build the city of Jerusalem, and the temple there,
“ are manifest, and fully attested by contemporary
“ witnesses, and by his own writings. It is as
“ manifest, that his design to rebuild Jerusalem and
“ the Jewish temple, was never accomplished,
“ but was frustrated and defeated. Whether it
“ was owing to miraculous interpositions, or to his
“ expensive preparations for the Persian war, and
“ other

" other circumstances of his affairs, and to his
" death and defeat in that war; the over-ruling
" providence of God ought to be acknowledged in
" the event. And the argument for the truth of
" the Christian religion, taken from the fulfilment
" of our Saviour's predictions in the destruction of
" Jerusalem, and the overthrow of the Jewish
" people by Vespasian and Titus, and their con-
" tinued dispersion, remains in all its force. It is
" an argument which I never intended to weaken:
" it is, I think, a demonstrative argument for the
" truth of the Christian religion; and, as I have
" often hinted in this work, deserving the atten-
" tive regard and serious consideration of all man-
" kind."

The fourth volume of the collection of Jewish and Heathen Testimonies completed another capital part of our author's original design. It was published ten years after he had finished his Credibility; so that this grand object, with the interruption arising from some smaller productions, occupied him during the space of forty-three years. A reflection presents itself on this occasion; which is, that works of great consequence are not of speedy execution. Although Dr. Lardner led a very retired life; though he entered but little into public business; though he was a stated preacher only twenty-one years, and that but once a day; yet

¹ Testimonies, vol. iv. p. 67, 68, 70, 71.

we see how long a time he was employed, and diligently employed, in accomplishing the end he had in view. Those who are not themselves engaged in important and extensive literary undertakings, can have but an imperfect conception of the difficulties to be surmounted, the disappointments to be incurred, the books to be procured and waited for, the dates to be settled, the facts to be ascertained, and the various other causes which often occasion delays, that must be far more unpleasant to the writer than they can possibly be to any reader whatever.

Though our author's life and pen were so ardently devoted to the public good, he never received any thing that could deserve to be regarded as a recompence for his labours. The salary he had, whilst he continued to be a preacher, was very inconsiderable; and his works were often published by him to his loss, instead of his gain. This was particularly the case with respect to the latter volumes of the *Credibility*. At length he parted with the copy-right of that performance, together with all the remaining printed copies of it, for the trifling sum of a hundred and fifty pounds. Such a sum was by no means an equivalent for the expences he had incurred: but he consented to the agreement, in the hope that the work would be rendered more extensively useful, when it became the immediate interest of the booksellers to promote

its sale'. From the scarcity of the separate volumes, and the immense price to which complete sets of the Credibility have since arisen, it is to be presumed that these gentlemen have had no reason to repent of their bargain. As to Dr. Lardner, his work is with the Lord, and his reward with his God.

Whilst our author submitted patiently to various disadvantages, in order to serve the interests of truth and virtue, and to maintain the honour of the Christian religion, he was not insensible that he had not met with the support and encouragement to which he was entitled. He particularly complained of the neglect of the rich dissenting laity, in purchasing his volumes*. This I remember his having once mentioned to me in a letter; in which he took notice, that he had never received any mark of favour from the dissenters; "not," said he, "so much as a trust." He here referred

* Memoirs, ubi supra, p. 129.

† That excellent and munificent citizen, Thomas Hollis, Esq; must be exempted from this charge. In 1764, Dr. Lardner requested him, by letter, to subscribe to his Collection of Jewish and Heathen Testimonies. Upon this application, Mr. Hollis sent the good man a bank-note of twenty pounds, which the Doctor told to a friend, was the greatest sum he had ever received from any of his benefactors^a. There can be no doubt but that several of the wealthy dissenters purchased our author's writings, though this was not done by them so generally as might have been expected, and as the merit of the works deserved.

^a Memoirs of Thomas Hollis, Esq; vol. i. p. 253.

to Dr. Daniel Williams's charities and library, the trustees of which consist of thirteen ministers and ten lay gentlemen. It was not to the honour of that body, that Dr. Lardner was never chosen to be one of their number. His deafness, I believe, was considered as an objection, but surely without sufficient reason; for no person could have been better qualified to give advice on most occasions, and especially with reference to books. If I had not believed that his nephew, Mr. Nathaniel Neal, was influenced by a principle of extreme delicacy, I should have thought him somewhat to blame in the affair. That gentleman was not only a trustee, but agent for the trust, and had a great sway in all its concerns. If, therefore, he had intimated, that the election of his uncle would be a desirable measure, it could scarcely have met with an objection. I should be unwilling to suppose that any little bigotries, with regard to Dr. Lardner's theological sentiments, contributed to his being neglected. It is certain that no such narrowness of spirit is found in the present trustees.

The last work of our author, that was published during his life-time, was the fourth volume of his *Testimonies*. As, however, some posthumous pieces of his have since made their appearance, I shall mention them in this place. There came out, in 1769, *Memoirs of the Life and Writings of Dr. Lardner*, to which were annexed, eight sermons upon various subjects. The four first of them had by himself been transcribed for the press.

On the fifth and sixth, though not fairly transcribed, he had written as follows: "Perused, and, so far as I am able to perceive, all is right; and I humbly conceive ought to be published." These two Discourses are on the internal marks of Credibility in the New Testament, and are admirably worthy of perusal. They are the sermons which he had preached in 1723 and 1724, at the Tuesday evening lecture. and contain, in some degree, the outlines of his great work, and especially of that part of it which relates to the facts occasionally mentioned in the Evangelical and Apostolical writings..

In 1776 was published, a short Letter, which our author had sent, in 1762, to Mr. Caleb Fleming, upon the Personality of the Spirit. It was printed at the end of Mr. Cardale's Enquiry whether we have any Scripture warrant for a direct Address either to the Son or to the Holy Ghost.

It was a part of Dr. Lardner's original design, with regard to the Credibility of the Gospel History, to give an account of the heretics of the two first centuries. To the arrangement, therefore, of his collections upon this subject he applied himself, after he had finished his Jewish and Heathen Testimonies; but he did not live to complete his intentions. Some parts, indeed, of the work were fitted for the press, having received his last corrections; whilst in other parts only a few hints were written. It was doubted, for a time, whether the progress he had made in his undertaking was sufficient for

it to be laid before the public. However, upon mature deliberation, his papers were put into the hands of the Rev. Mr. Hogg, a worthy, learned, and judicious dissenting minister at Exeter, who, in the additions which he made to Dr. Lardner's materials, did not introduce a relation of any person, excepting where the Doctor himself had drawn up a part of it, or had left some hints or references. In consequence of Mr. Hogg's revisal and assistance, there appeared, in 1780, in one volume, quarto, "The History of the Heretics of the two first centuries after Christ: containing an account of their time, opinions, and testimonies to the books of the New Testament. To which are prefixed, general observations concerning Heretics." Though this volume is not, upon the whole, so valuable and important as some of the former ones, it is possessed, nevertheless, of very considerable merit. It recites the testimonies of heretics, rectifies a variety of mistakes concerning them, and refutes many groundless charges to which they were exposed from the ignorance, false zeal, and bigotry of their adversaries.

The last posthumous publication written by Dr. Lardner, appeared in 1784. It is intitled, "Two Schemes of a Trinity considered, and the Divine Unity asserted." This work consists of four discourses upon Philippians, ii. 5—11. The first represents the commonly received opinion of the Trinity; the second describes the Arian scheme;

the third treats on the Nazarean doctrine; and the fourth explains the text according to that doctrine. Our author had himself transcribed these sermons for the press, with particular directions designed for the printer. The manuscript having come into the possession of Mr. Wiche, a very respectable dissenting minister, of the Baptist persuasion, at Maidstone, in Kent, he gave it to the public. Even those who are far from agreeing in sentiment with Dr. Lardner, have applauded the candour, the simplicity, and the love of truth, which these discourses evidently discover. Indeed, they are chiefly estimable for the temper and spirit with which they are composed. It was not to be expected that they could contain much new matter, on points which, of late years, have been so frequently and copiously discussed.

Providence spared the life of Dr. Lardner to a long term; and, his hearing excepted, he retained, to the last, the use of his faculties, in a remarkably perfect degree. At length, in the summer of 1768, he was seized with a decline, which carried him off in a few weeks, at Hawkherst, the place of his nativity, and where he had a small parental estate. He had been removed thither, in the hope that he might recruit his strength by a change of air, and relaxation from study. The day of his decease was the twenty-fourth of July, in the eighty-fifth year of his age. His remains were conveyed to town, and deposited in Tindal's burying-ground, com-
monly

monly called Bunhill Fields. At his particular request, no sermon was preached on occasion of his death*. Thus did his modesty and humility accompany him to the last moment of his earthly existence. Some time after his decease, a stone was erected to his memory, with an English inscription.

In looking back upon the life and character of Dr. Lardner, and comparing them with those of other men, we shall find few names that are more truly entitled to be remembered with veneration and applause. The sincerity of his piety has been seen in a variety of circumstances which I have had occasion to mention. Indeed, a regard to God appears to have been ever the governing principle of his actions. His piety, too, was of the most rational kind, being founded on just and enlarged views concerning the nature of religion. What his ideas were in this respect will be found in many parts of his writings, and may be discerned in two extracts from letters of his to Lord Barrington, which are inserted below^x.

Correspondent

* Memoirs, ubi supra, p. 136.

^x The Extracts are as follows:

" I have ever had a good deal of curiosity, which, I apprehend, usually accompanies a love of truth. But I have learnt a necessity of restraining, or at least of regulating and governing that curiosity. The capacities of men are limited, and even small in comparison of the whole compass of things. The most important matters ought to be first preferred. A few certain principles

Correspondent to our author's piety was his love of truth, as is manifest from the whole of his works.

are better than a great many, if only obscure and uncertain. When evidence is not full and clear, it is best to suspend and doubt. Religion is the concern of all men; it ought therefore be clear and plain. And obscure religion is of little or no value: indeed, it seems to be one of the greatest absurdities that can be conceived. If God make a revelation, intended for the general benefit of mankind, one would expect it should be clear. We find in the Old Testament predictions of a dispensation, under which men should not need to teach one another, saying, *Know the Lord: for all should know him, from the least to the greatest.* I have a strong persuasion that the Gospel was plain at first. It is contained in the four Gospels and Acts, which are plain books. If Christianity is not plain now, I apprehend it must be our own fault, some way or other. A doctrine that contains plain directions of duty, and plain promises of a reward, sufficient to encourage to duty in all circumstances, to strengthen against temptations, to give comfort under afflictions, to calm the affections, and can be easily proved to be certain, is indeed an excellent doctrine. This is true religion. This is a pearl of great price, a treasure indeed, for which a man may reasonably part with all that he has to buy it. I say, easily proved to be certain. But it requires a sincere and honest disposition: Such a mind, with good instruction, will learn more in a few hours, than the prejudiced and selfish, in an age. Indeed, such as these can never receive the truth, unless mixed with other matters that subvert it.

I am the more discouraged in the pursuit of speculations in matters of religion, because I observe our blessed Saviour (who knew all things) and his Apostles enter not into many particulars of the future life, and deliver no abstract notions about any thing, nor say any thing whatever to gratify mere curiosity, but only matters of the utmost consequence to the happiness of men. I have also observed, that the obscure and difficult principles of the philosophers,

works. No one seems ever to have preserved a greater impartiality in his enquiries, or to have been

philosophers, the great variety of opinions they had, and the uncertainty of them, were great defects in their philosophy, and objections against it. And I have been not a little concerned to see the state of Christianity among us resemble so much the state philosophy was in at the time the Christian religion first appeared in the world. There is still the more reason for those who sincerely desire the interest of religion, to keep to plain, certain truths, if possible; because of the prodigious, the almost universal indolence of mankind, who continually catch at every thing, that may countenance their neglect of enquiry and examination; who seek nothing but this world, how they and their families may enjoy ease, riches, and grandeur. For all which reasons, it may be best not to advance any obscure and uncertain matters in religion; or, if for some special reasons they are advanced, that they be proposed as uncertain and doubtful, and that little stress be laid upon them."

In a subsequent letter, he thus writes:

"A principal occasion of my writing as I did about curiosity, was (as far as I remember) the subject matter of debate or enquiry, the future reward of good men. I apprehend some ill consequences from too nice and curious enquiries about that, since God has not plainly revealed to us, as I supposed, the place of that happiness. But whatever I said about curiosity, I never intended to discourage a diligent and careful search after truth. There is scarce any thing more disagreeable and offensive to me, than the common indolence of mankind about religion, and truth in general. And therefore another reason, why I speake against needless enquiries, was, because I feared that the rendering religion abstruse and difficult, and multiplying questions in divinity (especially in those things which are of importance), might be improved by mankind, as a pretence to countenance their lazy and indolent disposition^a."

^a Memoirs of the Life and Writings of Dr. Lardner, p. 130—134.

more

more free from any undue bias. He followed truth wherever it led him; and for the attainment of truth he was admirably qualified, both by the turn of his disposition and his understanding. With a mind so calm and unprejudiced, with a judgment so clear and distinct, he could scarcely fail of forming right apprehensions concerning most of the subjects which the course of his studies enabled him to investigate.

The candour and moderation with which Dr. Lardner maintained his own sentiments, constituted a prominent feature in his character. Those he differed from in opinion, he always treated with gentleness and respect; and in the controversies he carries on with them, there is no severity of censure, no harshness of language. This circumstance is the more worthy to be mentioned and applauded, as it is so different from what we often meet with in the present day. Many of our writers seem to be reverting to that abuse of each other, which was common among scholars some time after the revival of literature. They are not satisfied without casting illiberal reflections on the persons of the men whose tenets they oppose, and arraigning the motives of their conduct. What renders this disposition the more ridiculous is, that it is frequently exerted on the most trivial occasions. Apprehended mistakes in philology, or diversities of judgment in matters of mere taste, are treated

treated with as great a bitterness as if they were crimes of the deepest dye. How much more beautiful, and more worthy of imitation, was the manner of conducting disputable questions which was pursued by Dr. Lardner! Such a method will be found, in the end, more favourable to the diffusion of truth, and more conducive to a lasting reputation. Circumstances, indeed, may arise, in which a sharpness of chastisement may appear to be justifiable. Uncommon insolence and uncommon bigotry may deserve to be strongly exposed : and yet, even here, a manly neglect and contempt of unmerited censure may be the most honourable and the most useful mode of behaviour.

Benevolence, as well as piety, entered deeply into Dr. Lardner's character. Though his retired life prevented him from taking a very active part in public designs, he was ready to promote every good work. To persons in distress he was ever willing to contribute, to the highest degree which his fortune would admit. On some occasions, he exerted himself with great vigour and success. When a gentleman came to London, in 1756, to solicit contributions towards building a church for the Protestants of Thorn, in Poland, our author was particularly serviceable to him, both by his advice and recommendation. He, in a great measure, took upon himself the management of the affair ; on which account he afterwards received the thanks of the president and fellows of the college of Thorn,

Thorn, in an elegant Latin letter. Near the time of his decease, he was engaged in affliting and recommending the Rev. Mr. Finman, minister of the reformed congregation at Rutzow, in the dutchy of Mecklenburg Schwerin, who had come over to England for a like purpose. Upon this occasion, a letter was written to Dr. Lardner, by Dr. Secker, archbishop of Canterbury, which was the conclusion of a very long correspondence between two eminent persons, who were now each of them on the verge of dissolution¹. As this letter displays the archbishop's state of mind at that time, and the continuance of his regard for our author, it will be inserted below².

In his private deportment, Dr. Lardner was very amiable. His manners were polite, gentle, and obliging; and he was attentive, in every respect, to

¹ Memoirs, ubi supra, p. 127, 128.

² "Good Dr. Lardner,

" I would have seen Mr. Finman, and answered your first letter, if I had been able. But it hath pleased God to afflict me, " for many months past, with so constant, and so severe a pain in " one of my hips, that I am almost incapable of any attention to " any thing else. Become quite useless, and nearly worn out, I beg " you will pray God to give me patience, and such degree of " ease as he shall think fit: and can only add, that as I hope my " spirit is truly Christian towards all who love the Lord Jesus " in sincerity, so I am, with particular esteem and thankfulness " for the whole of your obliging behaviour to me through life,

" Your faithful friend and servant,

" Lambeth, July 13, 1768.

" THOMAS CANT.^a

^a Memoirs, ubi supra, p. 128, 129.

the laws of decorum. It has been justly remarked, that he “ seemed carefully to observe the rules laid down in his Counsels of Prudence.” Perhaps it may not be disagreeable to my readers, to be informed of the mode in which he carried on conversation. Paper, pens, and ink, being immediately brought in when visitors came to his house, they wrote down such intelligence as they had to communicate, or the observations and questions which they wished to propose. To these, as they were severally written, he replied with great freedom and clearfulness, and in a way that was both instructive and entertaining. As the paper contained the unconnected answers and remarks of the different guests, upon different subjects, it formed what would have appeared to a stranger to be a very heterogeneous mixture. It was, however, carefully preserved by the Doctor, to be perused by him when his visitors were gone; and the perusal of it often led him to objects of farther consideration and enquiry.

Our author was not one of those scholars who are unacquainted with mankind. He had seen much of life during his residence with Lady Treby; he was continually visited by persons of various professions and countries; and he possessed that sagacity of observation, which is the principal requisite towards obtaining a knowledge of the world.

* Memoirs, p. 130.

Nor is it uncommon for eminent men, who live in retirement, to have some people near them, who are fond of conveying to them every kind of information which it is in their power to collect. Whether such information may not occasionally derive a tincture from the mistakes and prejudices of the communicators, I stay not to examine.

On the learning of Dr. Lardner it is not necessary to enlarge, since his character in this respect is known to all the world. With regard to that species of literature which was cultivated by him, he was accurate and profound in the greatest degree. Some branches of knowledge there were to which he did not apply his attention ; for who is adequate to every object ? But as a divine, and especially with relation to his acquaintance with the New Testament, and with Christian antiquity, perhaps he never had his equal. The works of our author being thus valuable, and relating to objects of the highest importance, it is not surprising that they should be held in great esteem, not only at home, but abroad. I have already mentioned, that the first part of the Credibility was translated into Low Dutch by the Rev. Mr. Cornelius Westerbaen of Utrecht, and into Latin by the Rev. Mr. John Christopher Wolff of Hamburgh. A German translation of it appeared at Berlin and at Leipsic, in 1750, by the Rev. Mr. David Bruhn of Memel in Prussia, and Mr. John David Heilmann ; and it was accompanied with a large Preface,

face, by the Rev. Professor Siegmund Jacob Baumgarten. The second part of the Credibility was likewise translated both in Holland and in Germany. In 1751, the German translation of the fourth volume was printed, and the whole design may probably have since been compleated. The Vindication of the three Miracles was also translated into German, by the Rev. Mr. Meyenberg, and published at Zell, in 1750, together with a Preface, written by the Rev. Dr. Plesken. A translation of the Discourses on the Circumstances of the Jewish People appeared at Halle, in 1754; and of the Treatise of the Demoniacs, at Bremen, in 1760^b.

The literary connections of Dr. Lardner were extensive; and he was particularly on a very friendly footing with his learned contemporaries among the dissenters. This has already been sufficiently apparent, in the notice which, in the course of the present Narrative, there has been occasion to take of Lord Barrington, Dr. Hunt, Mr. Tomkins, Mr. Hallet, Dr. Ward, Dr. Benson, Dr. Chandler, and Dr. Doddridge. Our author had a high regard and esteem for Mr. Mole, and they freely communicated to each other their opinions and remarks on subjects of religion and literature. He corresponded with Mr. Brekell of Liverpool, the writer of some valuable tracts on points of Biblical criticism. In the latter part of his life,

^b Memoirs, ubi supra, p. 125, 126.

Dr. Lardner's

Dr. Lardner's greatest personal intimacy was with Mr. (afterwards Dr.) Caleb Fleming. This gentleman lived within a few doors of him, and there was a perfect conformity betwixt them with respect to their theological sentiments. Residing so near to each other, for between twenty and thirty years, their intimacy grew up to the most unreserved confidence. My friend Dr. Towers has favoured me with the perusal of a series of letters, written to Dr. Fleming by Dr. Lardner, in which he freely disclosed his thoughts concerning men and things. Dr. Fleming was a man of great integrity, and of an acute and vigorous understanding, but in regard to learning, not by any means to be named with his friend. He was for a time minister to a small congregation at Bartholomew Close, after which he succeeded the celebrated Dr. James Foster at Pinners Hall. Few people have written a greater number of pamphlets, some of which, being published without his name, were but little noticed by the world. Others of his tracts were better received, and several of them are curious and valuable. There are instances in which he was singular, not to say whimsical, in his positions. His writings might have been more generally acceptable and useful, if they had been free from a certain quaintness and obscurity of style. Aiming at originality and strength of expression, he often lost perspicuity, and never attained to elegance. He was a determined enemy to civil and ecclesiastical

ecclesiastical tyranny, and a very zealous Socinian.

Dr. Lardner's connections and friendships were not confined to persons of his own religious communion. He was conversant with several respectable clergymen of the church of England, and received from them testimonies of their esteem for his character, and approbation of his works. The letters which passed between him and bishop Waddington, and his long and uninterrupted acquaintance with archbishop Secker, have already been mentioned. He maintained a large correspondence both at home and abroad; and particularly in America and Germany. In consequence of the reputation he had acquired by his publications, he was visited by most of the learned foreigners who came over to England; and, after their return to their own countries, many grateful acknowledgments were transmitted to him of the friendly reception he had given them, and the assistance they had derived from him in their literary designs and pursuits^c.

Such being the excellencies which Dr. Lardner possessed, both as a writer and a man, it was natural that he should often be spoken of in terms of respect and applause. Lord Barrington concluded his correspondence with him, concerning Jairus's daughter, in the following language: "Thus I

^c Ibid.

" think our controversy ends. But our friendship
" and correspondence I hope never will, but with
" our lives : and our friendship, I hope, then, but
" for a season. I have had so much satisfaction
" and instruction from your great learning and
" judgment, and from your patience, candour,
" openness, and obliging manners, that, whenever I
" have difficulties to put, in the future course of
" my enquiries, or want to see what difficulties my
" sentiments are liable to, I shall take the liberty
" to trouble you, unless you forbid me; or (if
" your great civility will not allow you to do that)
" I forbear, from the sense I have, of how much I
" rob the world, in the result of the learned pur-
" suits they justly expect from you, by such kind
" of interruptions as those I have given you ^d."

This was a tribute paid to Dr. Lardner's merit in early life; since which he has been justly applauded by a variety of respectable writers. Dr. Benson speaks of our author as "his highly esteem-
" ed friend ;" and refers his readers to the Credibility, as a fair, full, and impartial account of the testimonies of the ancient Fathers ^e.

" With respect to the external evidence of Chris-
" tianity," says Dr. Jebb, " it may be observed,
" that the works of the very learned and ingenious
" Dr. Lardner, are calculated to produce a firm

^d Memoirs, ubi supra, p. 41, 42.

^e Benson's Paraphrases, vol. i. p. 326. and vol. ii. p. 376, second edition.

" persuasion

" persuasion of the truth of those historical facts
 " which form the foundation of the Christian in-
 " stitution".

The bishop of Carlisle (Dr. Law) has prefaced a quotation from our author, in the following terms : " I shall only beg leave to introduce the testimony of a candid and judicious writer, who appears to entertain right notions both of the nature of the Christian institution, and of the best means for the propagation and support of it ; and who has supplied us with the most valuable collection of ancient evidences of its truth ".

In an anonymous tract, known to be written by Mr. Lindsey, that gentleman observes, " that the publication of the letter on the Logos, in 1759, soon made a great revolution in the opinions of learned men ". For the piece was soon known to be his, though without his name ; and his numerous writings were already in the highest request ; his character also for probity, impartiality, for critical skill, and the knowledge of

^f Short Account of Theological Lectures, quarto, 1772, p. 17. note.

^g Considerations on the Theory of Religion, p. 30. note, seventh edition.

^h I do not agree with the worthy and learned writer in this assertion. It doth not appear to me that the influence of the Letter on the Logos was speedy, but slow and gradual, and in conjunction with other publications ; among which may be mentioned Mr. Cardale's Treatise on the true Doctrine of the New Testament concerning Jesus Christ.

“ the scriptures, and of ecclesiastical history, inferior to none ; and in some of these respects, superior to any of the age.”

The same gentleman, in the same publication, has drawn Dr. Lardner’s portrait somewhat at large ; and it is with particular pleasure that I present it to my readers. “ To praise the living would be invidious and awkward : but of those who have finished their course well, we may speak freely, and be heard. Is there a literary character, that stands higher upon the lists of fame, as a man, a Christian, and a divine, than the late Dr. Lardner ? After an education in an university abroad, at that time not inferior in learned tutors to either of our own, on his return to his own country, he became early acquainted with the worthy and learned in the church established, and out of it. Archbishop Secker, bred a dissenter, like himself, cultivated and courted his friendship through life. His Vindication of some of our Lord’s miracles against Mr. Woolston’s attacks, is among the first upon that occasion, and the most candid. But his Credibility of the Gospel, in seventeen volumes, octavo, and Jewish and Heathen Testimonies to its Truth, in four volumes, quarto, have exhibited such a mass of evidence for it, and established it on so broad a foundation, as nothing can shake. In this he gives, continually, curious and useful instances of critical skill and judgment :

“ ment : but his love of truth and impartiality
 “ are without example, in fairly representing every
 “ argument and objection, without the least dis-
 “ cernible bias to any opinion or party. His piety
 “ and humility are conspicuous in all his writings,
 “ and particularly in his sermons, some of which
 “ are among the best models for pulpit-discourses
 “ in our language, in explaining important pas-
 “ sages of the gospel, and pointing out the easy and
 “ natural instruction to be deduced from it¹. ”

Bishop Watson, in his Catalogue of Books of Divinity, having mentioned Dr. Lardner's Letter on the Logos, immediately subjoins some reflections, which are so admirable, that they cannot be omitted. “ Newton and Locke,” says his Lordship, “ were esteemed Socinians, Lardner was an avowed one ; Clarke and Whiston were declared Arians ; Bull and Waterland were professed Athanasians. Who will take upon him to say that these men were not equal to each other in probity and scriptural knowledge ? And if that be admitted, surely we ought to learn no other lesson, from the diversity of their opinions, except that of perfect moderation and good-will towards all those who happen to differ from ourselves. We ought to entertain no other wish, but that every man may be allowed, without loss

¹ Examination of Mr. Robinson's Plea for the Divinity of our Lord Jesus Christ. Preface, p. xviii. xxvi. xxvii.

“ of fame or fortune, *et sentire quæ velit, et quæ sentiat dicere.* This absolute freedom of enquiry, it is apprehended, is the best way of investigating the sense of scripture, the most probable mean of producing an uniformity of opinion, and of rendering the gospel dispensation as intelligible to us in the eighteenth century, as, we presume, it was to Christians in the first.”

The ingenious writer of the Memoirs of Thomas Hollis, Esq; has mentioned a short, but beautiful encomium, which was passed on Dr. Lardner and one of his eminent contemporaries, by a very learned person, who has often said, that if he were sentenced to imprisonment for seven years, he would not desire to take any books with him into his confinement besides the works of Jortin and Lardner^k.

As several of our author's publications were of course subjected to the examination of the different literary journals which this country produces, the conductors of them were necessarily led to give, on various occasions, their sentiments concerning him; which, I believe, has uniformly been done in terms of approbation and respect. In one place, the Monthly Review thus speaks: “ Before we present our readers with a view of what is contained in this volume (the first volume of the ancient Jewish

^k Memoirs of T. Hollis, Esq; vol. i. p. 254.—I am indebted to my excellent friend, Dr. Disney, for collecting and presenting me with the preceding testimonies.

“ and

" and Heathen Testimonies), we cannot, as friends
" to the religion of our country, forbear expressing
" the grateful sense we have of the eminent service
" our learned and worthy author has done to the
" cause of Christianity, by his excellent writings in
" defence of it. Of the many able writers that have
" appeared in the present age, as advocates for the
" truth of the Christian religion, there are none, in
" our opinion, that deserve to be preferred to Dr.
" Lardner; few, indeed, that can be compared
" with him. In point of learning, his merit is very
" considerable: but what is much more valuable
" than mere learning, there is a pleasing simplicity
" in his manner of writing, and a very uncommon
" degree of candour and impartiality. He seems
" to have nothing in view but the discovery of
" truth; scorns the mean and contemptible arts of
" misrepresentation, or concealing objections and
" difficulties, and gives his readers a clear and full
" view of the subject. How amiable is such a
" character! how worthy of imitation¹!

In another place, the Monthly Reviewers have expressed themselves in the following language:
" From the great service rendered to Christianity
" by the laborious pursuits and learned compila-
" tions of Dr. Lardner, his name will ever be dis-
" tinguishedly honoured in the history of the
" Christian church. Dr. Priestley, when he speaks

¹ Monthly Review, vol. xxxii. p. 1.

" of this most learned and excellent man, generally calls him, ' the prince of modern divines ; ' and we think this tribute to his illustrious merit not improperly paid. To the most elaborate and extensive investigations of ecclesiastical antiquity, he added all that knowledge of Greek and Roman literature, which enabled him so thoroughly to discriminate the comparative worth and excellency of the sacred and profane writers. To the learning of the scholar he added also the veracity of the historian ; while the amiable candour and humility of the Christian gave a pleasing lustre and embellishment to his more eminent accomplishments ."

Language to a like purpose occurs in different parts of the Critical Review ; but I shall content myself with referring to one place, in which Dr. Lardner is described as master of a great extent of reading ; as possessing a clear head to collect and state facts and evidences, and a sound judgment to determine concerning the weight of them ; and as having spared no time or pains in his laborious task .

In consequence of the recent original of the English Review, it hath had but one opportunity of characterizing our author ; but that opportunity it hath embraced with distinguished zeal and

^m Monthly Review, vol. Ixiv. p. 33.

ⁿ Critical Review, vol. iv. p. 517.

energy,

energy. "The name of Lardner," says the reviewer, "is well known in the literary world. No writer, from the very existence of Christianity, ever conferred so essential service upon true religion, or contributed more to clear up its evidence and elucidate its antiquities. Accordingly, there is no country, where the Christian religion is professed, in which his name is not held in the greatest esteem. Every church would have been proud to boast of him as their member, and his voluminous productions have been translated into almost all the languages of Europe.

"Dr. Lardner certainly possessed a very clear and sound understanding, and great shrewdness of judgment. His industry in the pursuit, and perseverance in the investigation, of truth, are without example. But the quality by which he was chiefly distinguished, and which was perhaps of more service to him than all the rest, was the candour and ingenuity of his mind. He examined every thing without prejudice. Seated, as it were, in a more elevated sphere than other men, he was not subject to have his understanding darkened by the clouds, and jaundiced by the noxious mediums, of partiality, bigotry, and enthusiasm. He has, therefore, been as successful in refuting the false and suborned evidences of Christianity, as in asserting and illustrating the true. Thus he has contributed, more than all

"the

" the mistaken zeal and the pious frauds of a thousand saints and pontiffs could have done, to the rendering it that simple, venerable, attractive, and engaging structure which God and Jesus intended it. It is no longer obscured by impostures, and disfigured by the false props and buttresses that were brought to support it."

A manuscript elogium on Dr. Lardner has been put into my hands by a friend, Ebenezer Radcliff, Esq; the principal part of which is inserted at the end of this narrative.

I have only recited the testimonies given to our author by writers of our own country; but foreigners have not been deficient in spreading forth his praise. Those who have translated his works have introduced them with proper encomiums on their merit; and different learned men have taken occasion to express their sense of the excellence and value of his productions. Walchius, in his Bibliotheca Theologica selecta, calls the " Credibility" *insigne opus*; and it is highly spoken of in the Bibliotheca Germanica, and the Bibliotheque, ancient and modern, of Le Clerc^P.

Every well-disposed reader must contemplate with pleasure, on a life which was so admirably and usefully spent as was that of Dr. Lardner. Such a life presents us with a beautiful proof of the dignity to which the human mind is capable

[•] English Review, for December, 1785. p. 423.

^P From the obliging information of the Rev. Dr. Gosset.

of ascending, when it is formed on right views of the Supreme Being, and on the true principles and spirit of the Gospel. Nor may a character like this be reflected upon with pleasure only, but with the greatest advantage. The private virtues of Dr. Lardner may justly be recommended to universal imitation. His love to God and benevolence to man, his regard to truth, his integrity, his purity, his moderation, his candour, his meekness, and his humility, it would be the honour and happiness of Christians in general to select as the models of their temper and conduct.

Dr. Lardner may be held out, in particular, as a fine example to those of his own profession. It is not, indeed, in the power of every one to attain to the same extent of learning, or to perform the same services to Christianity; but it should be the ambition of such as are engaged in the work of the ministry, to follow after him with diligence and zeal, though they may not be able to do it with equal steps. As the dissenters had the honour of producing Dr. Lardner, he will naturally be the object of emulation to the dissenting clergy. They will so far look up to him as their pattern, as to endeavour to qualify themselves for appearing, when occasions call for it, in the great departments of literature, and especially in the cause of religious truth and liberty, and in the defence and explication of the sacred writings. Some among them, at least, will, it is hoped, always be inspired with

with this disposition; in consequence of which they will not only gain reputation to themselves, and reflect credit on the body to which they belong; but, what is of infinitely greater importance, will unite with the wife, the learned, and the good of every denomination, and of every country, in promoting such a knowledge of religion in general, and of the Christian religion in particular, as will be found eminently conducive to the truest improvement and comfort of the present life, and to the everlasting felicity of human beings.

E X T R A C T
FROM A
MANUSCRIPT ELOGIUM
ON
NATHANIEL LARDNER, D. D.
BY EBENEZER RADCLIFF, ESQ.

THE Christian religion being founded on facts, to establish them, and the credit of their relaters, is of the utmost consequence. Our author, therefore, thought the highest respect he could pay to it was, to bring it to the test of history; and the result of his enquiries was, that, so far from depending upon the forged miracles, pious frauds, and spurious testimonies of the ancient fathers, or the metaphysical casuistry of modern defenders, he found it to be the weaker for their alliance; and, like a skilful engineer, he demolished the buttresses, which an officious or timorous zeal erected, that the Gospel, having nothing to defend but its own fortress, might be the more firm and impregnable.

So

So delicate were his sentiments respecting religion, and so jealous was he of its honour and purity, that, so far from conniving at any flaws in its character, he could not bear it should be suspected; and, I am persuaded, he would not, even for the immortality it proposes, have consented to admit one unfair or unsound argument in its defence.

While his extensive learning qualified him to try the merits of every evidence, his unbiassed integrity, and sacred veneration for truth, enabled him to pass an impartial sentence.

As his testimony was honest, so it was disinterested. He had none of that literary pride and ambition which are a disgrace to the pursuit of truth, and lessen the credit of its champions. His profession debarred him from worldly emoluments and honours, and he aspired to no recompence, but that which flows from the nature of true religion, and the approbation of its divine author. So that, if I were disposed to rest my faith on any human authority, it should be *his*.

I should regard the sanction of his decision as the next in credibility to inspiration itself, and almost entitled to implicit veneration. But this was what he never wanted; and he has so clearly and candidly represented the grounds of his own belief, that every person has an opportunity of judging for himself: and if there are any who, after such a discussion, can remain enemies or neutrals, we must

must leave them to God and their own consciences, without entering into their hearts or determining the motives by which they have been governed.

It must be acknowledged, that revelation has met with many able and learned advocates, who have set the various evidence of it in the most striking points of view. Its internal excellence, and consistency with the divine perfections, have been clearly illustrated. The expediency of divine interposition has been fairly deduced from the errors and imperfections of philosophy. The propriety of the time of Christ's appearance has been proved from a concurrence of a multitude of circumstances; and the agreement betwixt reason and scripture has been fully ascertained: and many other arguments strongly presumptuous, though not decisive, in its favour, have furnished occasion for the display of much ingenious but unnecessary reasoning.

Let but the faithfulness of the sacred records be established, and the truth of those extraordinary facts which attested the divine mission of Christ be confirmed, and we may challenge the world to dispute the conclusions which are deducible from them.

The gospel he taught must be the oracle of truth, the rule of our faith and conduct, and the ground of our immortal hopes and expectations.

This important task was reserved for this learned
author,

author, and Providence seems to have blessed him not only with talents and fidelity, but with an extent of life equal to the execution of it.

To vindicate the evangelical historians from ignorance, incapacity, and collusion ; to fix the credit of the sacred records by the concurrent testimony of Jews and Gentiles, scoffers and apostates ; to trace the progress of the church through several successive ages ; and to shew the regular and faithful transmission of the scriptures without innovation or corruption, were the great objects of his studies for many years : and such is the perspicuity with which he describes and illustrates the transactions of Christ's ministry, that he appears more like a contemporary with the apostles than an inhabitant of later ages.

If to this we add, that cloud of witnesses which he collected from all quarters, to give their sanction to the miracles, doctrine, moral sublimity, and wonderful effects of the Christian religion, it must be allowed, that he has erected a monument to his great Master and himself, which shall last as long as the world endures.

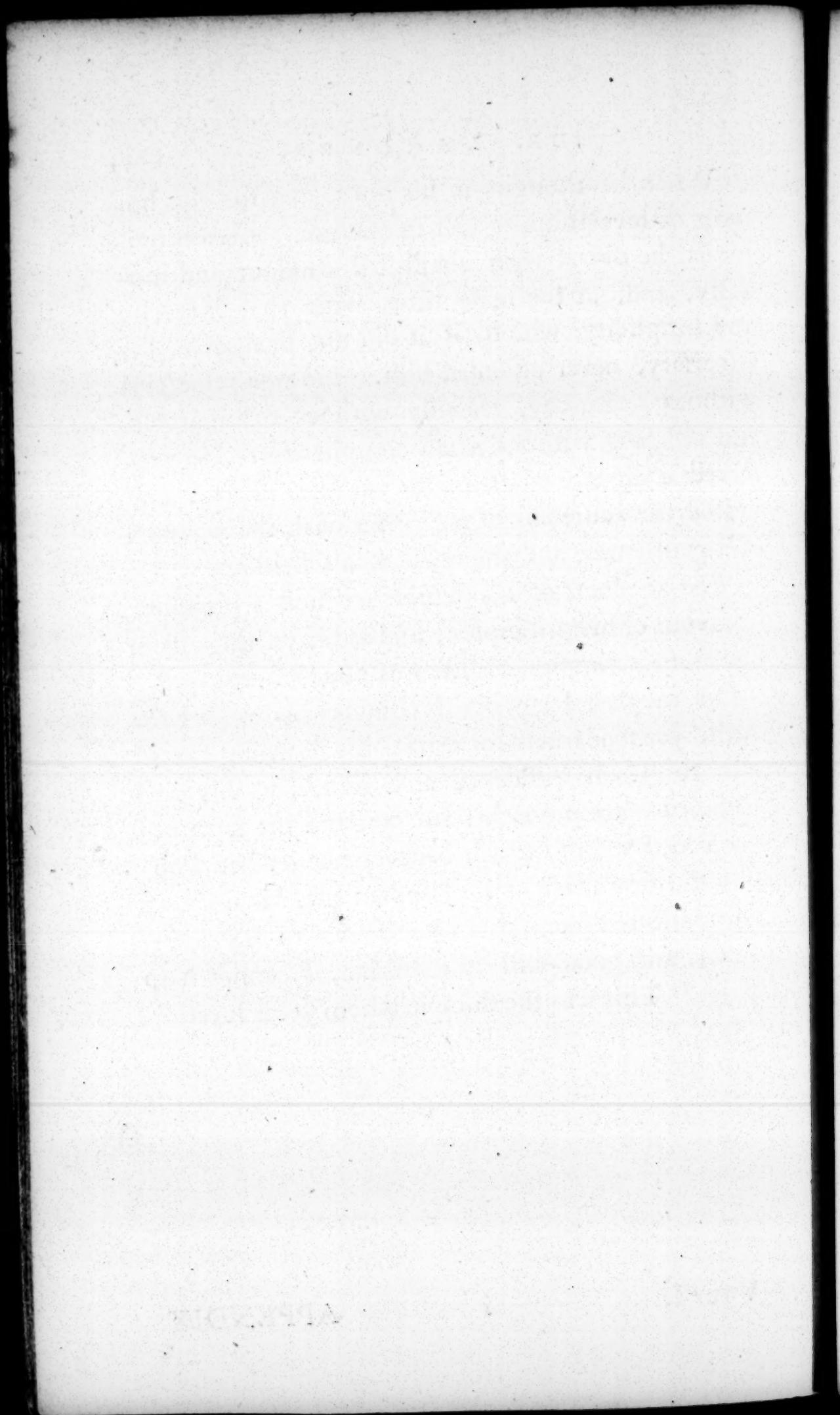
As his writings justified and explained the leading facts of the New Testament, his character was a living pattern of its rules and precepts. His heart was full of the generous warmth of its benevolent spirit ; but his sentiments were cool and dispassionate, the result of calm enquiry and steady conviction.

When

When he thought it his duty, and for the honour of revelation, to call in question common opinions, he did it with unaffected candour and modesty, and, at the same time, with that integrity and simplicity, which, if it did not bring over his adversary, never offended him. He was respectful without ceremony, friendly without officiousness, and obliging without mean compliances. He preserved a dignity of character without reserve, and united the acuteness of the critic with the manners of a gentleman and the spirit of a Christian.

The goodness of his temper excited a prejudice in favour of his principles ; and as his writings were free from acrimony, his life was clear of reproach.

On the whole, when I consider his ardour for truth, yet tenderness for error, his learning mixed with so much diffidence and humility, his zeal tempered with so much prudence, and his faith accompanied with so much benevolence ; when I observe the simplicity of his deportment, his uniform and unaffected piety, his attachment to his divine Master, and good-will to mankind, I cannot help saying, “ This was the disciple whom Jesus loved.”



A P P E N D I X.

N° I.

**LETTERS between Dr. WADDINGTON, Bishop of Chichester,
and Mr. LARDNER.**

Eaton, near Windsor, Nov. 14, 1729.

Reverend Sir,

I HAVE received at this place your most agreeable present of a Vindication, &c. against Mr. Woolston, and do beg leave to return you my most sincere and hearty thanks for it; you have certainly took a very proper and Christian way with him, and I wish it may have the designed effect upon him: I have no manner of objection to make against any one line in the book: you have pursued both him and his Jew very closely; and if they are capable of conviction, you seem to be the man whom God has raised up for that great service: I cannot say less of your excellent performance; and what I have said comes, I assure you, from the sincerity of my heart.

Will you then, dear Sir, give me leave as sincerely to take notice of a passage or two in your preface which as yet I cannot so well digest, if I take you right in them, and I am sure I have no intention to mistake you wilfully.

Page 4, you have these words, " If by way of such a reply he means a reply without abusive railing terms, or invoking the aid of the civil magistrate;" and a line or two after you oppose " solid reasons and arguments" to " pains and penalties :" Now these are passages that I own I cannot perfectly approve of: you seem in the first to put abusive railing terms, upon the same foot with invoking the aid of the civil magistrate; and in the latter, to intimate as if pains and penalties had been demanded by somebody or other to be inflicted upon Mr. Woolston, to supply the place of solid reasons and arguments. If I am right in putting this interpretation upon your words, I must beg leave to say, that, in my poor opinion, there is no occasion

for them ; I don't know any one person of character who, in writing against Mr. Woolston, has invoked the aids of the civil magistrate to inflict pains and penalties upon Mr. Woolston, for being an Infidel, or writing against the Christian religion ; but only for writing against it in such a blasphemous, abusive, scandalous manner, as I think may very justly raise the indignation and resentment of every honest man, whether Christian or not. The two bishops of London and St. David have expressly declared this in print ; and I believe it is the sentiment of many more of that order in the church, if not of all, that (as you very well express it in the 11th page of your preface) "it is the pleasure of Christ that men should not be compelled to receive his law by the punishments of this life, or the fear of them ; but that they should be left to propose their doubts and objections—provided it be done in a grave, serious manner." But give me leave, dear Sir, to ask you, with some concern, whether Mr. Woolston has proposed his doubts and difficulties in a grave, serious manner ? and if you say he has not done it, as I believe you will, do not you seem to intimate yourself, by putting in that reserve, as if you thought the civil magistrate might punish him for not observing it ; or at least, that there is nothing, in punishing him for the breach of all the laws of Christian charity and common decency, contrary to the will and pleasure of Jesus Christ ? This then is the difficulty that sticks with me in respect to these passages in your preface : and as I have very freely, and yet, I hope, in a very friendly manner, mentioned them to you, so I doubt not but you will, in the same free and kind way, endeavour to remove them ; which will make me perfectly easy ; for I am sorry to meet with any thing in your writings (so truly serviceable to the Christian religion) that may give the least occasion of offence to the sincere lovers of Jesus Christ and his gospel. I am, with the utmost respect, esteem, and gratitude,

Reverend Sir,

Your affectionate

faithful friend,

EDWARD CHICHESTER.

To

To this Mr. Lardner answered as follows :

My Lord,

I HAVE received the favour of your very kind and friendly letter, for which I am greatly indebted to your Lordship. As your approbation of what I have written in the defence of Christianity affords me the highest satisfaction, so it is no small concern to me that there has been any thing said in the preface which is offensive to a person of your Lordship's known judgment and integrity; who have also expressed so much kindness to me, beyond my desert or expectation.

I believe (and think I may be positive), that when I wrote those expressions (preface, page 4), I had no regard to a demand made by any one, of a punishment on Mr. Woolston for his writings. I only intended to disown, in plain terms, which might not be mistaken, the principles of persecution, which he had charged upon so many of his adversaries. As when I mentioned a reply without abusive terms, I had no reference to any reply written in that way (for I have seen no such, nor has he complained of any thing of that nature that I know of, besides his being called an Infidel, whereas, he says, he is a Christian), so when I wished his conviction without pains and penalties, I had no reference to any demand made of them. But I do own, that, in the first paragraph of page 11, I had a reference to a demand, which I thought had been made for punishing him for his writings. And, I suppose, if he should be punished, it will be for writing against Christianity, and not for his manner of doing it.

I am far from thinking that Mr. Woolston has written in a grave and serious manner: and I have strongly expressed my dislike of his manner in the latter end of page 11, and page 12.

Your Lordship freely declares, he ought not to be punished for being an Infidel, nor for writing at all against the Christian religion; which appears to me a noble declaration. If the governors of the church and civil magistrates had all along acted up to this principle, I think, the Christian religion had been

CXVIII APPENDIX, N° I, TO THE

before now well-nigh universal. But I have supposed it to be a consequence from this sentiment, that if men have an allowance to write against the Christian religion, there must be also considerable indulgence as to the manner likewise. This has appeared to me a part of that meekness and forbearance, which the Christian religion obliges us to; who are to reprove, rebuke, and exhort with all long-suffering. The proper punishment of a low, mean, indecent, scurrilous way of writing, seems to be neglect, contempt, scorn, and general indignation. Your Lordship has observed (in my opinion) extremely well, that this way of writing is such as may justly raise the indignation and resentment of every honest man, whether Christian or not. This punishment he has already had in part, and will probably have more and more, if he should go on in his rude and brutal way of writing. And if we leave all further punishment to him, to whom vengeance belongs, I have thought it might be much for the honour of ourselves, and of our religion. But if he should be punished farther, the stream of resentment and indignation will turn; especially if the punishment should be severe; and it is likely, that a small punishment will not suffice to engage to silence, nor to an alteration of the manner of writing.

I truly think, that the Christians of this nation are at present under a great trial; and I heartily wish we may behave so under it, as may be most for the lasting honour of our religion. It seems to me much better for us as Christians, to err somewhat (if it be an error) on the side of tenderness and meekness, rather than on the side of severity; nothing having done the Christian cause greater prejudice, than the severities practised by some who have bore the name of Christian. It has seemed to me (as I have said) to be a consequence of permitting men to write against Christianity, that we must also shew indulgence toward the manner, in some measure. But no one is to be allowed to say any thing injurious to men's characters: this is properly a breach of the peace. I am persuaded, that no man has been more sensibly grieved and offended than myself, at the abusive treatment that has been given to men of the highest order and greatest

greatest merit in the church. And if any thing of this kind has been said, cognizable by the laws, no man can complain of a just punishment.

I have, my Lord, freely represented my sentiments, which are submitted to your Lordship's consideration with the greatest humility and deference. I hope, I have nothing more at heart, than the general interest of the Christian religion. And if I have declared in favour of too great lenity, it has been purely because I have supposed it would be, in the end, most for the advantage of that good cause.

I have the honour to be,
My Lord,
Your Lordship's
Most obliged, most humble,
and obedient Servant,

Nov. 22. 1729.

N. LARDNER.

To which his Lordship answered.

Eaton College, Nov. 25, 1729.

Reverend Sir,

I HAVE received your's of the 22d, and am very well satisfied with the explication you have been pleased to give me of your meaning in those passages in the 4th page of your preface, which, upon the first reading, seemed to me to have a more particular view than you now declare they had, and I can very readily believe what you now assert to be true, and should indeed beg your pardon for my mistake (though it was by no means a wilful one) if the candour that appears in every part of your letter did not tempt me to think you have granted it without my asking.

I don't see that you and I are likely to differ much, as to any other points touched upon in your letter; our general principles, with respect to the true method of propagating and defending our holy religion, are, I believe, the same; and I wish as heartily as you can do, that no other had ever been followed by ecclesiastical or civil governors; but still I am at a loss how to understand what you are pleased to say, "That there must be likewise

“ considerable indulgence allowed as to the manner of writing “ against the Christian religion.” I am not sure whether, if Mr. Woolston heard this, he would not say it is all the indulgence he desires; for he has declared, “ that he cannot “ write otherwise than he has done already;” and if for that reason, because he cannot write otherwise, he must be indulged in writing in his own way, there is no doubt but that he will go on in writing after such a manner, as you seem to think may justly raise the indignation and resentment of every honest man, whether Christian or not; and for which I cannot, I own, think that bare contempt is a sufficient punishment; considering the great mischief such a way of writing must do, and daily does in the world: I am willing to indulge such writers as far as ever Christian meekness and charity require me to go; but I would just beg leave to ask, what opinion you think St. Paul, or any other truly primitive Christian, would have had, of any person writing in *those* days (and that while he still professed himself a Christian) in such a manner as Mr. Woolston does in *these*? what you imagine their conduct would have been? whether they would have carried the Christian principles of meekness and tenderness so far as to have indulged him in such a manner of writing, in hopes of working his conviction in that way? It does not appear, by those instances we have in the epistles of the exercise of Christian discipline in those days, that they were then indolent in matters of such consequence to the Christian religion! nor do I think we are under any obligation to do so now, and therefore I should be unwilling to give any indulgence at all to “ such a manner” of writing, much less a “ considerable one,” as your words (considering the occasion on which they are used, and to which they must refer) seem to imply that we should. You, indeed, add afterwards, “ That “ no man is to be allowed to say any thing injurious to men’s “ characters, and that if any thing of this kind has been said, no “ man can complain of a just punishment, for this is properly a “ breach of the peace.” Now no one who has read Mr. Woolston’s books or prefaces, can surely have the least doubt upon his mind, but that he is in this respect guilty to the highest degree;

gree; and therefore, in your opinion, deserves a just punishment; but besides this, I think a sincere Christian may, and ought to go farther; he may very justly be concerned for the honour of his blessed Saviour, and have some real stirrings in his breast for preventing such abuses of that holy name as have no sort of argument in them to persuade and convince; cannot be the result of any fair reasoning against the Christian religion, but must necessarily proceed from a spirit fit to be abhorred by all mankind, and can never be a humane way of "propagating "truth," whether for or against Christianity. These, dear Sir, are my free and impartial thoughts upon that particular passage in your letter which mentions the "considerable indulgence" that ought to be made as to the "manner" of writing against Christianity. And I hope, upon the whole, that you and I don't differ so much, even on this point, as we may seem to do. What punishments are proper for such a manner of writing, or whether it may be looked upon as a breach of the peace in a "Christian society," and so by your own allowance punishable by the civil magistrate, are points I shall not enter into now, any farther than to declare freely my opinion, that such a writer ought to be punished by the ecclesiastical censure of the church, and declared excommunicate by a proper authority; and if he could be farther restrained from writing on in the same "outrageous "manner" by the civil magistrate (with a liberty still to use reason instead of railing), I don't see how this could be any prejudice to the Christian religion, any contradiction to the true forbearing spirit of it, any injury to the just liberties of mankind, or any injustice to the writer himself, but in my poor opinion the greatest kindness that could possibly be done him. I heartily thank you, good Sir, for the present you have made me of your additions to your former excellent book, which, I am sure, I shall read with a great deal of profit, as well as pleasure, as soon as they come to hand. You will be so good as to excuse me in not transcribing this long letter, which indeed (considering the many corrections in it), I should do, but such compliments between ends will, I hope, not be expected, nor am I sure if I should

I should attempt it, not to commit again as many faults as I mend. I am, therefore, without any more ceremony, and with the greatest sincerity and respect,

Reverend Sir,

Your very faithful Friend,
and humble Servant,

EDWARD CHICHESTER.

Mr. Lardner answered:

December 2, 1729.

My Lord,

I HAVE the favour of your letter of the 25th of November, which, I hope, your Lordship will permit me to say, is a pattern of condescension and goodness; nor can I help esteem-ing it an honour to me, that my sentiments are so agreeable to that truly Christian spirit expressed in your letter.

The reafons of my saying that it was a consequence of permitting men to write against the Christian religion, "that there must be likewise considerable indulgence as to the manner of writing," were chiefly these: that the permission of writing against the Christian religion contained in it so much, that the "manner" of it also should be bore with, in a considerable degree; and secondly, the cause of those who oppose Christianity is so bad and desperate, that they who argue against it are naturally, and almost necessarily, led into an unfair way of arguing. If men are so weak, or so wicked, as to write against Christianity, I expect to see them make use of some bad arts to support their cause. The fact has been agreeable to this supposition. The writers in the defence of Christianity have actually exceeded their adversaries, not only in their arguments and reafsons, but also in the manner of arguing and reaſoning.

If what Mr. Woolston says, that he "cannot write other-wise," be true, it farther confirms this supposition, and is a shameful truth for him and his cause, publicly acknowledged by himself.

To

To your Lordship's question, What I think would have been the conduct of St. Paul, and other primitive Christians, in a like case? I readily answer, my Lord, that, I believe, they would have pronounced a sentence of excommunication, and it would, in my opinion, be justly pronounced upon Mr. Woolston. The sentiments advanced by him, and his manner of defending them, do both together, and each of them singly, deserve that sentence.

Mr. Woolston has writ in a most abusive and injurious manner to men's characters, but I did not know that he had been prosecuted for it, though I thought he well deserved it.

I have also the honour to agree with your Lordship, that we ought to have a very great zeal and concern for the honour of our blessed Saviour, and an abhorrence of all ways, "not humane, of propagating truth, whether for or against" Christianity; or that have a plain tendency to destroy a sense of religion and virtue in men's minds.

I conclude with humbly acknowledging your Lordship's goodness in communicating to me your sentiments upon these matters in so kind and friendly a manner.

I am, My Lord,
Your Lordship's
Most obliged, most humble,
and obedient Servant,

N. LARDNER.

A P P E N D I X, N° II.

LETTER of Mr. LARDNER to LORD BARRINGTON,

March 7, 1729-30.

My Lord,

I AM very sensible of the honour done me by your Lordship's approbation of the "Vindication of three Miracles, &c." and have a great deal of reason to rejoice, that the manner

manner in which the argument for free writing is managed in the preface is not unacceptable to your Lordship; for, as to the principles themselves, I had no doubt but they would be agreeable to your judgment, however they may be suspected or disliked by others, who have less studied the Christian doctrine; a true Christian may suffer on account of his religion, but he can never make others suffer on account of theirs. Whatever may be the consequence of it, we are not to support Christianity by force. Our blessed Saviour, rather than make use of compulsion, would chuse to be without a follower. John vi. 67.

I will briefly go over all your Lordship's difficulties relating to the death of Jairus's daughter, and then offer some considerations in favour of the common opinion.

I. "There is not the conclusive evidence that Jairus's daughter was dead, &c." The evidence is conclusive and satisfactory here. If they might be mistaken in her case, so they might in Lazarus, when buried: and if buried, while in a deliquium or sleep, he might have continued in it several days.

II. Σώθησεται in the text is a general word. It does not directly express healing barely, but that she should do well, let the case be never so desperate; and this was as much as it became our Saviour to say at that time.

III. Our Saviour, your Lordship knows very well, did not speak in Greek, but in Syriac. Probably he used one and the same word, when he said "Lazarus sleeps," and the "Maid sleeps." That the Evangelists have used καθένθω in one place, and κοιμέομαι in another, is of no manner of importance; since the disciples understood him to speak of natural sleep, when he said, "Lazarus sleepeth."

IV. The saying, she was "not dead," as well as she "sleeps," does not appear to strengthen the assertion. It is all one and the same thing. I think we ought to make no scruples here, now we have the story of Lazarus, in which it is related, first, that Christ said, this sickness is not "unto death," and yet he did die: and then, "our friend Lazarus sleeps:" meaning at the same time, that Lazarus was dead, and he would

raise

raise him up. As when he said Lazarus's sickness "was not unto death," he must be understood of a final death; so when he said, the maid "is not dead," he must be understood also of a final death, since all her friends knew she was dead.

V. The matter of the fifth objection serves, in my opinion, to shew the propriety of the common interpretation. "Be gone," for there is no occasion for you; the maid is not to be buried, she is not finally dead, but will be raised up, as out of a sleep; therefore your lamentations are not seasonable.

VI. The last objection is taken from the circumstances. I perceive no impropriety at all in the action of taking her by the hand, supposing her to be dead; nor in the ordering "meat to be set before her." This last indeed would have been very improper in the case of the two other persons raised to life, who were abroad, but she was at home. Their life, health, and strength, would also appear sufficiently in walking home before the company present, with all the vigour and agility becoming men. But as this other case was in a woman, who cannot with decency show strength and vigour by leaping, or agility in walking, and as she was at home, eating was a very proper sign to be given of her health and strength. Moreover, as her resurrection was performed before so few witnesses, it was very proper to have some more near, close witnesses of her life and health; and such the servants and friends of the family would be, when they immediately saw her eat.

The considerations whereby I would support the common opinion, are these:

I. If Jairus's daughter was not dead, Matthew and Mark have given no instance of a resurrection to life by our Saviour; which would be very strange, since there were several, and they appear to know there were. Another consequence is this: If it be supposed, that Jairus's daughter was not dead, 'tis impossible to prove to an infidel, that the other two persons were dead. Her friends supposed her dead; Mat. ix. 24. When Jesus said, *the maid was not dead, they laughed him to scorn*:

Mark

CXXVI APPENDIX, NO. II. TO THE

Mark v. 40; and they laughed him to scorn: Luke viii. 53; they laughed him to scorn, knowing she was dead. We must take the cases of those Christ healed or raised as they are brought to him, or represented to him by those who may be reasonably supposed to know what their cases are; or we overthrow all evidence, and weaken the credit, not of this only, but of all the other miracles of our Saviour.

II. Matthew and Mark thought she was dead, and that this miracle was a resurrection to life, or else they would have related some other miracle of this sort.

III. All the three Evangelists represent her dead. Matt. ix. 18. 24. Mark v. 35. 40. Luke viii. 49. 53.

IV. The common paraphrase of, *the maid is not dead, &c.*" that is, she is not finally dead, so dead as to be buried, but shall be raised, as out of a sleep, is very agreeable to our Saviour's way of speaking upon some other occasions; and is extremely suitable to silence those weepers and lamenters to whom he spoke.

I intended to have concluded here; but, upon a review, I fear your Lordship may think I have not paid a sufficient regard to the first circumstance of the sixth objection, viz. "that our Saviour takes her by the hand, before he says, *Arise!*" which is not an action suited to raise one absolutely incapable to help herself." There is no more assistance given to a lame man than to a dead man by taking him by the hand to enable him to walk alone. No action or word is used in working a miracle, because there is any virtue in the word spoken, or the action used, of taking hold by the hand, or in any other action assignable. All the virtue is owing to the infinite, almighty power of God alone, who graciously performs the work, when those words are spoken, or those actions are done by his servants, by his orders.

Again, "That our Saviour takes her by the hand, before he says, *Arise!*!" Perhaps, the taking by the hand, and the word *arise*, were simultaneous, or the word *arise* was spoken immediately after Christ took her by the hand, as soon after as could be. But I shall shew presently (as I apprehend) the propriety

of the different method taken by Christ and Peter; though it is by no means necessary, that we should be able to assign the precise propriety of every word or action recorded in the history of these matters. It seems to me, not becoming Peter to make use of any action, that looked like helping a man perfectly impotent (such as taking him by the hand) before he first pronounced these, or the like words: *In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, arise and walk:* but after that it was proper enough for him to use an action, which is a sort of token of kindness, and take him by the hand.

When Peter raised Dorcas, he first went to prayer, and did not take her by the hand till after she had opened her eyes, and sat up; that is, was perfectly restored to health and life by the Divine Being. It is too arrogant for an apostle, in the case especially of a dead person, to use an action that has an appearance of giving help, before he has been at prayer, or made some other address to God. But in our blessed Saviour it was highly proper and becoming, to take by the hand, in a kind and friendly manner, even a dead person, as if she were alive. Though no one would reasonably say there was any impropriety in Christ's saying *Arise!* to Jairus's daughter, before he took her by the hand, yet there does appear to me a peculiar propriety in our blessed Saviour's taking by the hand this dead young woman, before, or at the very instant, that he said, *Arise!*

I hope there is no reason for me to add a caution, that it ought not to be objected to me, that there was no such action used in the case of Lazarus, or the young man at Naim; because the circumstances of these cases are perfectly different. It would have been the highest impropriety for Christ to take Lazarus by the hand, whether he had himself gone into Lazarus's sepulchre, or Lazarus had been first brought up to him: it would also have been highly improper for our Saviour to have gone so near the young man at Naim, as to be able to touch him. He did as much as was proper before he raised him, in ordering the bier to stop. But as the young woman was laid in her chamber, and Jesus was brought thither, near to her, his taking
her

CXXVIII APPENDIX, N° III. TO THE

her by the hand is highly proper; it is one of the beauties and proprieties of our Lord's actions in this story, which ought not to have been omitted, and with which I am now much delighted, and heartily thank your Lordship for helping me to it. It demonstrates the plenitude of divine power, and divine goodness, that were and are in him. It is an affecting, endearing specimen of the love and friendship of the Son of God, and in him of God himself, to poor mortal men.

But whether I am in the right or not in those thoughts just mentioned, with which I now please myself (but, however, do not think them of any great importance), I apprehend I may except against an interpretation of a single phrase or expression, which is inconsistent with the rest of the narration. And I own, that I think this way of interpreting scriptures, would lead us into innumerable mistakes. I am, my Lord,

Your Lordship's
Most humble and obedient servant,
N. LARDNER.

APPENDIX, N° III.

LETTER sent by Mr. LARDNER to Mr. LA ROCHE.

SIR,

THE exact care with which you read the books of the New Testament, appears not only in the judicious remarks and observations, which I have received from you, but also in the difficulties which you sometimes propose to me. As for the difficulty mentioned in your last, concerning the omission of the history of our Saviour's ascension, in the gospels of St. Matthew and St. John, though related by St. Mark, xvi. 19, and St. Luke, xxiii. 51, I might say, in behalf of St. John, that he had read St. Mark's and St. Luke's gospels: and that one main view he had in writing was, to put down those things which the other Evangelists had not mentioned: but I do not insist

insist upon this. This omission may be accounted for by other considerations, which will justify St. Matthew as well as him.

" I. The design of all the Evangelists in their gospels, was " to write such a history of Jesus, as would prove him to be " the Christ." That this was their design appears from the gospels themselves. And St. Luke has expressly said, that it was his, chap. xx. 31, *These things are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God.*

" II. That Jesus is the Christ, is sufficiently shewn by his " miracles, the extraordinary appearances from heaven in his " favour during the course of his ministry, and by his resurrec- " tion from the dead, recorded by all the Evangelists." Our Saviour had himself put the truth of his mission upon his resurrection, as a decisive proof of his claim; Matt. xvi. 4, compared with Luke xi. 29, 30; John ii. 18—22. And St. Paul says, Rom. i. 4, that *Jesus was declared to be the Son of God by the resurrection from the dead.* See also Acts xvii. 3.

" III. By our Saviour's resurrection is always intended a " resurrection to an endless life, without dying any more; and " his ascension to the Father follows thereupon;" unless this had been the case, his resurrection, without any mention of his ascension, could not have been made (as it often is) the principal article of the Christian doctrine. *To be a witness with us of his resurrection.* Acts i. 21.—*With great power gave the apostles witness of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus.* Chap. iv. 33.—*If thou shalt confess with thy mouth, and believe in thine heart, that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved.* Rom. x. 9. See also Acts xxvi. 23. 2 Tim. ii. 8.

But I will detain you a little longer upon this head, to shew both these things particularly.

" I. By our Saviour's resurrection is always intended a " resurrection to an endless life, without dying any more." This is sometimes expressed; when not expressed, it is implied. *Whom God has raised up* (saith St. Peter), *having loosed the pains of death, because it was not possible that he should be holden of it.* Acts ii. 24.—St. Paul at Antioch, in Pisidia: *And as concerning that he raised him from the dead, now no more to return to*

CXXX APPENDIX, N^o III, TO THE

corruption. Acts xiii. 34.—*Knowing that Christ, being raised from the dead, dieth no more; death hath no more dominion over him.* Rom. vi. 9.

When not expressed, it is implied. St. Peter, in his discourses to Cornelius, makes no express mention of Christ's ascension, but preaches only his resurrection, as a proof that he was made Lord of all. Acts x. 40, 42. And the same apostle faith, that *God has begotten us again to a lively hope, by the resurrection of Christ from the dead, &c.* 1 Pet. i. 3, 4. St. Paul often argues in the same manner. At Athens he proves a future judgment by Christ, from his resurrection. Acts xvii. 31. And, Rom. xiv. 9. *To this end Christ both died, and rose, and revived, that he might be Lord both of the quick and dead.* And 1 Cor. xv. 12. and 20. Once more, 2 Cor. iv. 14.

I might likewise shew this to be agreeable to the style of the Evangelists, in their gospels. When our Lord, in St. Matt. xii. 40, publicly foretells his resurrection, saying, *As Jonas, &c.* it is implied that he should be no longer in the state of the dead. This is implied also in what he said to the disciples, Matt. xxvi. 32. It would be tedious to refer you to all the passages to this purpose in our Saviour's last discourses with his disciples, recorded by St. John: *I go to prepare a place for you,* John xiv. 2. *Because I live, ye shall live also.* ver. 19.

“ II. Our Lord's ascension to heaven was also supposed to “ follow upon his resurrection.” This is evident from John xx. 17, when he says to Mary Magdalen, *Touch me not! for I am not yet ascended to my Father,* or, I do not immediately ascend to my Father. It seems, she supposed that being risen, he would presently ascend to heaven: he therefore assures her, that there would be other opportunities for her to converse with him, and to examine whether it was really he himself, or not; and for him to communicate to her, or others, what was needful they should be further informed of by him: *But go to my brethren, and say unto them, that I ascend to my Father, &c.;* which words shew, that, *I am about to ascend to God,* or, *I am risen,* are in a manner equivalent terms. This is also evident from Acts ii. 23—35, particularly ver. 32, 33. *God's raising him*

him up, was an assurance that he was also *exalted*, or very soon to be exalted.

“ III. There was no absolute necessity, that the disciples, or “ any other persons, should see Christ ascend, or leave this “ earth.” For his exaltation to power was fully ascertained to the disciples by his resurrection (of which they had distinct proof), and by the descent of the Holy Ghost upon them: to others, by the testimony of the disciples, concerning his resurrection; by the gifts of the Holy Ghost bestowed upon them, and by the miracles they performed.

“ IV. But though there was no necessity of it, yet there “ was great wisdom and goodness in our Saviour’s granting “ the disciples a sight of his ascension from this earth;” as hinted by St. Mark and St. Luke in their gospels, and somewhat more particularly related, Acts i. 9—11;—because it was of use to confirm them, and to encourage them in the difficult work they were soon to enter upon. It is also of use the more to satisfy us, and all in after times, of the truth of his resurrection, and exaltation, though there are other things sufficient without it.

Upon the whole, it seems to me, that the Evangelists have acted wisely, and as the case required, in insisting chiefly on more important matters, than the sight the disciples had of Christ’s ascension from this earth. And the conclusion of St. Matthew’s gospel (to say nothing more of St. John’s) after the evidences of our Saviour’s resurrection, is a very proper conclusion of a history of Jesus, written to prove that he was the Christ. *And Jesus came, and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world.*

I am,

Your’s, &c.

N. LARDNER.

APPENDIX, N^o IV.

LETTER from Dr. MORGAN to Mr. LARDNER, with his
ANSWER.

Reverend Sir,

I HAVE lately read your Credibility of the Gospel History with a great deal of pleasure, and profit: I observe in it a spirit of candour and impartiality, not very common in works of this kind; and I think you have deserved very well of the learned world, by removing several considerable difficulties, which might seem to affect the evangelical history. It is a great unhappiness to your friends in general, and to me as much as any man, that by the nature of your disorder, we are deprived of the advantages we might otherwise reap from your conversation.

From what I had heard of your work, and of your known character, I had a curiosity to see what you had offered towards removing the difficulties concerning the historical and chronological account of Christ's birth and baptism, as related by the two Evangelists Matthew and Luke, or rather of St. Luke himself; for, as the matter now stands, the whole difficulty rests upon him, who places the birth of our Saviour in the days of Herod the Great, and at the time of the first taxation of the whole country of Judea by Cyrenius, and this by a decree issued out under the sole authority of Augustus, without the least mention of Herod's name; and with this farther chronological character, that Jesus was full thirty in the fifteenth of Tiberius. I must own that this has always appeared an unsurmountable difficulty to me, and that I am not yet able to get rid of it, after a careful consideration of all that you have observed and offered concerning it.

That any taxation, enrolment, or census should be laid upon the whole country by the sole authority of Augustus, while Herod was still king of Judea, and in high favour with the emperor, seems to me incredible; and I think no such instance

can be given, or any thing parallel to it, with respect to any country where the Romans owned a king.

The thing here speaks itself, and no man could doubt of it if he had not some prejudice or prepossession to the contrary. But our chronologers, in this point, have been forced to offer violence to Josephus, and to give up all his historical and chronological characters relating to the death of Herod the Great, and the nativity of Christ, though they are infinitely fond, at the same time, of maintaining the authority of Josephus in most other cases.

But what I lay the main stress on here is, the authority of Eusebius, towards the middle of the fourth century; who maintains that the taxation recorded by Luke, was the very same which was laid by Augustus upon the whole country of Judea after the banishment of Archelaus. And this is a decisive point, and even a demonstration with me, so far as history can be reduced to any thing of certainty, that Luke, Josephus, and Eusebius were in the right; and that there was no gospel extant in the time of Eusebius, and owned as authentic by the Catholics, which placed the birth of our Saviour in the days of Herod. For it is not to be imagined that Eusebius should contradict the genuine, authentic, and recognized gospels of his own times, or that he should make the Roman census laid upon Judea, as mentioned by Josephus and Luke, to have been the same, if this had been repugnant to the scriptures of that age.

The first chapter of Luke, from verse 4 to the end, is plainly a parenthesis, as it interrupts the course of the story in order of time, and besides, contains, as I think, several plain marks of ignorance, superstition, and forgery: for this parenthesis seems to have been taken from the pseudo Matthew, with some farther additions and improvements, which made the matter look still worse,

In Luke i. ver. 28—33, the angel Gabriel is introduced as appearing to the Virgin Mary, to assure her, by a revelation from God, that she should conceive, without the knowledge of man, in a miraculous way; and that the child born of her,

should be that great Prince or temporal Deliverer who had been foretold by the prophets. *He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Most High: and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David. And he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end,* ver. 32, 33.

This, one would think, should have been a sufficient declaration from God, to put Joseph and Mary out of doubt, that the child was to restore the kingdom to Israel, and settle an everlasting dominion in the house of David, as God had declared by the mouths of all the prophets; and as the whole nation had ever understood them, and founded their expectations upon them. And yet, afterwards, when Zacharias the father of John, Simeon, and Anna the prophetess, came to prophesy the same thing, Mary was very much astonished, she *kept all these sayings, and pondered them in her heart,* but knew not what it would come to, or what such predictions should mean, though she had been let into the secret by a revelation from God before her conception. Matthew mentions nothing of this revelation from God to Mary by the angel, but places the whole credit of the story upon Joseph's dream, that which his spouse had declared to him, or should have declared, was true.

There is another remarkable difference between the pseudo Matthew, and Luke's annotator, which seems to discredit the whole story of Christ's being born under Herod. Matthew tells us, that soon after the nativity of our Saviour, Joseph, being warned of God in a dream, took the young child and his mother, and fled into Egypt till the death of Herod. But his emendator in Luke assures us, that after the parents had been at Jerusalem, and performed the ceremony of purification in the temple, *they returned again to Galilee to their own city Nazareth,* Luke, chap. ii. 39, without the least mention of Herod, or any apprehensions they were under from him.

The genealogy of Christ in Matthew and Luke, supposes plainly that he had some natural descent, and that he was, as St. Paul affirms, according to the flesh, of the seed of Abraham,

and

and descended from the fathers of the Jewish nation. But the story of our pseudo Matthew cannot possibly be reconciled with this.

Our modern chronologers, in attempting to justify this piece of false history, have been obliged to offer violence to Josephus, and give up all his historical and chronological characters with respect to the reign and death of Herod. And had it not been for such a prejudice, they could have found no difficulty at all in Josephus, as to this matter. That he was made or declared king of Judea in the 5th Julian year, or in the year of the Julian period 4673, and that he died in the 42d Julian year, or the year of the Julian period 4710, would have been thought very plain from Josephus, had there been nothing else in the case. In the Julian year 42, March 13, about three in the morning, there happened a great and remarkable eclipse of the moon, which is mentioned by Josephus as falling out a little before the pascha, when Herod's life was despaired of; and he died that year before the feast. This eclipse happened on the full moon before the pascha; and besides this, there is no other eclipse of the moon which can stand in competition with it, within the time that Herod's death may be disputed; I mean no eclipse visible in Judea, or within the observation of that country.

You may here observe, that this supposed revelation from God to Mary by the angel Gabriel, was the declaration of a thing false in fact, though such hope or expectation had been deeply rooted and confirmed in the whole Jewish nation for near one thousand years, or from the time of the revolt of the ten tribes. For after this, all their prophets had promised and foretold the restoration of the kingdom to the house of David, and the perpetual duration of it in that family after such a restoration.

But Christ himself always disclaimed this Messiahship, and declined all the overtures made to him about it; and he would not be received and owned as that *branch from the root of Jesse*, who was to restore the nation to their ancient liber-

CXXXVI APPENDIX, N^o IV, TO THE

ties and independency, as had been declared to them from the mouths of all the prophets.

When our Saviour came upon his trial before Pilate, he renounced this Jewish character of the Messias, and declared that he had never set up any such pretensions, that he had made no such claim among the Jews, and that though this was what they charged him with, and he must die for it, yet they could bring no proof of it.

But surely, had the revelation of the angel to Mary, and the prophecies of Zacharias, Simeon, and Anna, been now produced and proved, the evidence must have been very strong against him, and he had been justly put to death as an impostor and false prophet.

I know not what you may think of me, Sir, for the freedom of these observations; but I can assure you, that I am not at all interested in the matter, and therefore should not be sorry if the quite contrary should happen to be true.

You may keep this correspondence as deep a secret as you please, for I shall discover the subject of it to nobody without your leave.

I thought I could not talk to any man of greater impartiality and integrity, or who might be more likely to remove my scruples; and therefore I shall beg leave to subscribe myself,

S I R,

Your most sincere friend,

and humble servant,

May 10, 1735.

T. MORGAN.

Mr. LARDNER answered:

Hoxton Square, June 17, 1735.

S I R,

I AM honoured with your letter of the 10th of May. It is a great satisfaction to me, that the Credibility, &c. has been so far approved by a person of your learning and acuteness. I know, that I did not willingly dissemble, or lessen any objections against the Evangelical History; and was in hopes, I had removed

removed them to the satisfaction of the attentive and candid, who will make but just allowances for the loss of ancient writings.

I shall offer a few things in answer to your letter, with a design of giving farther satisfaction, or receiving farther light myself.

You say, "that any taxation, enrolment, or census, should be laid upon the whole country by the sole authority of Augustus, while Herod was king of Judea, and in high favour with the emperor, seems incredible." I apprehend that this ought not be thought incredible, considering the few remaining accounts of the treatment of dependent princes, or provinces. You indeed put it, "in high favour;" but I have plainly shewn, that Herod was for some time under the displeasure of Augustus. And it is evident from Josephus himself, that there was an oath exacted, and an enrolment made, at the latter end of the reign of Herod; an affair that answers very well to that mentioned by St. Luke.

But you say, the "main thing is the authority of Eusebius." This ought not to be so. For it is not reasonable to suppose, that Eusebius was fully master of the state of every province of the Roman empire, almost three hundred years before his own birth, scarce of any one. A learned Englishman might be mistaken about the time of some governor of Jamaica, or even of Ireland, who had lived two or three hundred years ago. And it is likewise possible, that Eusebius, though honest in the main, might have some partiality for the Evangelical history. Therefore he applied that passage, which relates to the taxation after the removal of Archelaus, to the enrolment in St. Luke; that is, he was willing to have St. Luke's history confirmed by a passage of Josephus, which makes express mention of Cyrenius: and therefore he took that, relating to Archelaus, or the time after his removal; but very injudiciously, to say nothing worse. For Eusebius, in that very chapter, places the birth of Christ in the 28th year of Augustus, after the conquest of Egypt, and the death of Antony. And according to all our Gospels, Jesus must have been born in the time of Herod, or

CXXXVIII APPENDIX, N^o IV, TO THE

at least before the removal of Archelaus ; how otherwise could he have been crucified under Pontius Pilate, after a ministry of some years, which ministry could not begin till he was thirty years compleat, or in his thirtieth year ?

You think it incredible, that there should be a taxing in all Judea, in the time of Herod the Great. But how should there be such a one afterwards ? when the land of Israel was divided, part made a province, part remaining under the government of Herod the tetrarch, and his brother Philip. And if the taxation, after the removal of Archelaus, affected the territories of Herod the tetrarch, you allow taxations of dependent princes. But indeed that census made by Cyrenius after the removal of Archelaus, was not universal (for all the land of Israel), nor would it have brought Joseph and Mary from Nazareth to Bethlehem.

I see no good reason to call all the latter part of the first chapter of Luke a parenthesis : it is a part of his history, and is quoted by Justin Martyr, and other writers of the second century. Mary might keep some things and ponder them, and be surprised, though she had before had general intimations of them. Luke ii. 19, is one of these places, where she is said to *ponder*, and with good reason. The song of the angels, which breathes nothing but peace and good-will, the mean circumstances of herself and her son at that time, might well lead her to serious meditation. Again, ver. 33, Joseph and Mary had reason to marvel, when Simeon spoke of the nature and extent of this benefit, and went on also to hint the disgraces and sufferings of Jesus. Nor are these things contrary to those related in the first chapter, but only some farther explications of things there spoken by the same spirit, for the instruction of Joseph and Mary, and the forming them to a becoming temper and conduct. For, chap. i. ver. 75, the design of this blessing now vouchsafed, is said to be, that we *might serve God in holiness and righteousness*.

In all the Gospels Jesus is the king of Israel, and the son of David. He no where disclaims these characters, though he was not such a prince as some fondly expected and imagined, and

and others maliciously charged him to be. Matt. xxi. 15. There were many at the temple, who said *Hosanna to the Son of David*; whom he justifies, though the Pharisees were displeased. Mat. xxii. 42. &c. he speaks of the Messiah as David's Son and Lord, so as to claim those characters to himself.

Though Luke says nothing of the journey into Egypt, it may have been performed according to the account in Matthew. The words of Luke amount to no more than an omission of that affair, without denying it to have been done. Such omissions are common in the Evangelists. Don't you, Sir, plainly perceive many things related in St. John's Gospel, between the baptism of Jesus, and the time when the other Evangelists begin their history of our Lord's public ministry?

In my appendix it is largely shewn that Herod died in the Julian year 42, or 43: I have not determined which; though I suppose the arguments there proposed, appear strongest for the year 42. But the matter is of no great consequence, which of those two years be right.

St. Luke's words concerning Cyrenius, ought, by no means, to incline us to think, that he meant the census made in Judea after the removal of Archelaus, but rather the contrary. These words are a parenthesis, and you know, Sir, that they admit of various senses. Whatever is the sense of that parenthesis, it is probable that the design of it is, to distinguish the enrolment there mentioned, from that made after the removal of Archelaus.

These things I submit to your consideration. I enlarge no farther upon them to a person of your learning and judgment. I am,

SIR,

Your humble Servant,

N. LARDNER.

cxl APPENDIX, N^o V, TO THE

APPENDIX, N^o V.

REMARKS upon some DIFFICULTIES concerning the CHRISTIAN DOCTRINE.

AS to the excellency and usefulness of the rules of Christianity, several strong objections have been made. The substance of them is as followeth.

Obj. In the Gospel there are many excellent precepts; but since they are the effect of heavenly inspiration, should not they have been rather supported with short and clear reasons, than delivered in the way of authority.

Ansf. I. It cannot be improper for a person who has a heavenly inspiration, or divine commission, to speak sometimes, or even often, in the way of authority.

II. When our Saviour delivers precepts in the way of authority, the fitness of so doing may be perceived. Particularly, this is observable in the 5th chapter of St. Matthew's Gospel, where he represents the design of his commission, and the nature of his doctrine. The Jews expected not a reformation under the Messiah, but great earthly advantages and great sensual indulgences. He therefore says, Matt. v. 17, *Think not, that I am come to destroy the law or the prophets. I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil.* The design of my commission is not to abrogate or weaken, but rather to confirm, strengthen, and enlarge the moral precepts and obligations contained in, or taught by the law and the prophets. Then, at ver. 21, *Ye have heard that it has been said by them of old time,* (it should be rendered to the ancients, *ἴππεθν τοῖς ἀρχαῖοις*) *Thou shalt not kill.* This is the sixth commandment, delivered by divine authority in the law of Moses, forbidding in express words actual murder only. And it is likely, that many of the Pharisees taught, that forbearing the sin expressly forbidden in the law was sufficient. When, therefore, Christ taught the restraint or moderation of anger, as a necessary duty, and as a compleating, fulfilling, or enlarging that law; was it not fit to speak in the way of authority? as a divine teacher, furnished with a commission from heaven, as he does ver. 22; *But I say unto you, whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause,*

cause, and what follows. This observation ought to be applied to the other precept of the law of Moses, afterwards insisted on, and in a like manner fulfilled by our Saviour.

III. The laws or precepts of Christ being in themselves all reasonable, need not to be demonstrated. When once they are proposed with authority, the mind assents to them immediately; they having an internal and manifest reasonableness and equity. Is not this evident in that rule, Matt. vi. 12, *Whatsoever ye would that men should do unto you, do ye even so to them?* The reasonableness of all Christ's other precepts is alike evident.

IV. Nevertheless Christ does reason sometimes, and gives such short and clear reasons as the objecter requires. He heaps up reasons in a concise manner against solicitude or anxiety, Matt. vi. 25—34; and, Luke xii. 15, he forbids covetousness in these words; *Take heed, and beware of covetousness:* and then adds that excellent reason, *For a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth:* and proceeds likewise to confirm and illustrate his doctrine by a parable. And in a like manner often. Thus when, Matt. v. 33, he improves or fulfils the precept or prohibition of the law, which says, *Thou shalt not forswear thyself;* and forbids swearing at all, that is in common conversation, he argues, and by reasons shews, the folly and wickedness of those mincing oaths which were used by the Jews, who scrupled using the name of God expressly. ver 33—37. Ver. 34. *But I say unto you, Swear not at all, neither by heaven, FOR it is God's throne, nor by the earth, FOR it is his foot-stool;* and what follows: giving a reason against every one of those oaths, and shewing that they were each one of them equivalent to swearing by the name of God: and then, lastly, shews the wickedness of all common swearing in ordinary conversation, ver. 37, *But let your communication be yea, yea; nay, nay: FOR whatsoever is more than these cometh of evil.* This is the design of all the context.

Obj. It is farther urged, that many things are forbidden in the most strict and severe manner, which are innocent, indifferent, or however not directly criminal. Thus, calling
Fool,

Fool, and Raca, are offences against which the judgment of hell-fire are denounced. Looking on a woman and lustng after her are equally culpable with committing adultery. Is the venereal act more criminal than any other? is it not equally natural and necessary? Can we forbear liking an agreeable object?

Ans. In the particulars first mentioned, Christ only forbids that anger, which is really evil and unreasonable; and those injurious and contemptuous expressions or names, which are really improper and unbecoming, and which we ought not to give each other at all, or not without very good and sufficient reason. And then these, or somewhat like them, may be used without contracting guilt. So St. Paul says, 1 Cor. xv. 36, *Thou fool:* and Christ says, Luke xiii. 32, *Tell that fox.* However, it may be observed, that the two words forbid by Christ, are reckoned by commentators to be expressive of the utmost contempt; and therefore are not to be indulged by us.

As to what concerns the thing next mentioned, the objector proceeds too fast. The original word used by Christ for WOMAN; and the context, and every expression there made use of, shews that our Lord is speaking of a married woman; and the obvious literal sense of the words is this: "That whosoever casts an eye upon a married woman, so as to desire" to have venereal commerce with her, "has committed adultery with her already in his heart." And is not this self-evident? Have not all mankind, that have been civilized, esteemed adultery a sin, or injurious? and if any action be criminal, the intention to do it is also criminal; and men who indulge criminal designs and intentions, must be guilty in the sight of God; for God, who is the governor of the world, and particularly of rational and intelligent agents, is judge of thoughts as well as actions. Civil magistrates can judge only of words and actions; but God can and does judge thoughts. All these things are evident beyond dispute. And no wise and good man, but, when he knows a woman is married, casts off his eye from her, or suffers not concupiscence to arise, and if it does, checks and condemns it: and every man ought to do so.

Obj.

Obj. How impracticable and intolerable are some other precepts? such as these, *Whosoever shall smite thee on the right cheek, turn to him the other also. If any man take away thy coat, let him have thy cloak also.*

Ansf. I. These precepts relate to small matters.

II. They are hyperbolical and proverbial expressions, and not to be explained or understood literally. That they are so, is evident. 'Tis said, John-xviii. 22, *And when he had thus spoken, one of the officers which stood by, struck Jesus with the palm of his hand.* But our Lord does not offer himself to receive another blow. On the contrary, he remonstrates against the injury done him; ver. 23, *Jesus answered him, If I have spoken evil, bear witness of the evil; but if well, why smitest thou me?* And St. Paul directs, 2 Thess. iii. 10, *We command you, that if any would not work, neither should he eat:* which sufficiently shews, that Christians need not be imposed upon, though Christ has said, *Give to every one that asketh thee;* and St. Paul has earnestly taught diligence in the two epistles to the Thessalonians, as well as in other places.

Obj. And are we not forbidden to take thought for the morrow?

Ansf. The precept is, *Mη μεριμνάει;* be not anxious or solicitous; or, be not anxiously thoughtful, or careful;—which is a reasonable precept.

Obj. In order to persuade to an unresisting submission and subjection to governments of the most cruel and absolute kind, is not the doctrine of the New Testament urged and pleaded?

Ansf. St. Paul's directions, Rom. xiii, and St. Peter's, 1st ep. ii. 13, are very reasonable. There were some Jews at that time, whom Christians were in danger of following, who refused obedience to heathen magistrates, especially to their inferior governors and officers. The Apostles therefore charge their converts to be obedient to magistrates of every rank. And, as magistracy is necessary, and very useful, obedience thereto is very reasonable, and submission must be earnestly recommended. The Apostles instructions upon this head afford

afford no support to arguments for unresisting submission to cruel and absolute governments, for their exhortations are founded in the benefit of government. St. Paul says, *Let every soul be subject to the higher powers—for rulers are not a terror to good works, but to the evil—for he is the minister of God to thee for good—for he is the minister of God, a revenger to execute wrath upon him that doth evil.*—St. Peter: *Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake; whether it be to the king, as supreme; or unto governors, as unto them that are sent by him, for the punishment of evil-doers, and the praise of them that do well.* And it appears from the history in the New Testament, that the Christians had a benefit from the Roman magistracy at that time; otherwise they would have been destroyed by the rudeness of the common people, and the Jewish malice. But yet, that some Christians were in danger of pernicious notions of liberty, like the Jews of that time, is evident from what follows in the fore-cited context of St. Peter: *As free, and not using your liberty for a cloak of maliciousness.* ver. 16.—St. Paul writes, 1 Tim. ii. 1, 2, that *prayers should be made for kings, and for all that are in authority, that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty;* or that we may, without disturbance, profess the principles of true religion, and practise the several branches of piety and virtue. And certainly, if Christians desire peace and tranquillity, and the protection of magistrates, they ought to be peaceable, and behave as good subjects. Nor has the Christian religion been prejudicial to civil liberty. Look abroad in the world: Have the people more rights and privileges in Mahometan and heathen governments and constitutions than in Christian?

Obj. Hath Christianity had a more real and extensive influence than philosophy? The best precepts cannot command attention and regard. A plain useful rule is wanted, that may be suited to the multitude.

Ansf. I. Since the publication of the Christian religion, all immoralities have appeared more glaring and odious than in former times, which occasions complaints of misconduct and miscarriages,

miscarriages, that gave none, or little offence among Heathen people, though they were very common.

II. Men are always apt to complain of their own times, and make unfair comparisons between the ancient and present or later times. They take the bright side of the former, and the dark side of the later, and so compare them together.

III. Christianity has had a real and extensive influence (far beyond philosophy) for reforming the manners and promoting the happiness of mankind. What miseries did the people suffer in the Roman republic ! How terrible were their triumvirates and their proscriptions, and some other things at times, in an age as philosophical and polite as any before it ! How barbarous and shameful the Roman diversions in the amphitheatre ! 'Tis to Christianity, which has abolished ancient Heathenism, that Mahometans owe their better sentiments. Christianity has abolished human sacrifices, and obliged parents to bring up their children, which were formerly exposed in Greece and Rome without mercy, and are so still in Heathen countries. In the city of Pekin, several thousand infants perish this way annually. There is no such thing among Christians. If that number perish in one city, how many through all the Chinese empire, and this number counting on from year to year ! Christianity took with the common people, or the multitude, in the first and purer ages, and in a short time, without the aid of civil power, made a progress, gained ground against superstition, which philosophy did not; had advantages of superstition, which philosophy never had.

I have answered particular objections, I hope to satisfaction. I desire leave to add some general observations.

Obj. I. It cannot be thought strange, that true religion, or a teacher of true religion, should recommend great meekness, forbearance, and a contempt of riches and honours. Many wise men and philosophers have seen, that there is necessity that good men bear and forbear; and they have said great and fine things of the vanity of riches and honours, and such like

advantages. Indeed all earthly things deserve little value, considering their uncertainty, and the shortness of human life.

II. Christianity is reasonable throughout, or, to use a modern phrase, it is a republication of the law of nature, with the two positive appointments of Baptism and the Lord's-supper or the Eucharist. Therefore all its precepts are to be taken in a reasonable sense. You are required to shew no more meekness than is fit and reasonable in this world of ours; you may defend yourselves, resist, remonstrate against all injuries, when you have any prospect of advantage; you may go to law, if the thing you contend for be worth it, and you have a prospect of success. But to resist, when you are in danger of perishing in the attempt; to go to law, when the thing desired will not repay the loss of time, if gained that way; or to appeal to judges, when they are ignorant, or partial and corrupt, what avails it? even though we have right, and the thing controverted be of some importance. The disciples were obliged to the greatest exactness of behaviour, and to as much generosity and self-denial as any men: yet our Lord teaches them to be wise as serpents, as well as harmless as doves. St. Paul insisted on his privilege of a Roman citizen, as often as it would be of any service. He humbled the magistrates of Philippi, and defended himself against the Jews to the utmost. In short, the Christian precepts ought to be understood, as they are defined to be exactly suitable to men in the present state of things.

III. Though the gospel be allowed to be only a republication of the law of nature, it is of great advantage, because men, through indolence, love of pleasure, or some other means, did not trace out the great truths of religion, or the obligations of virtue, by the exercise of reason; and they needed to be awakened and excited to the practice of what they did know.

IV. True religion could not be discovered or recommended to men in a wiser and more effectual manner, than it is, or has been, in the Gospel of Jesus Christ: or, there are the greatest advantages attending the method in which true religion has been taught by Jesus Christ. To have published the precepts

of religion and virtue in a plain and clear manner, suppose, and with some few plain and clear reasons, in the most solemn manner conceivable, as the ten commandments at Mount Sinai; together with plain and express promises of future happiness; would not have been so effectual as the Gospel method. And all the truths of religion, and precepts of happiness and virtue, are better recommended and enforced by the example of Christ's life, the patience, meekness, and fortitude of his death, and divine testimony to the truth, and his after resurrection, than by the fore-mentioned method, or any other I can think of. However, to this Gospel method belongs (besides what has been already mentioned) also the example of Christ's Apostles.

V. It was therefore fit, that the publisher, or republisher, of true religion, with a commission from Heaven, should publish it in some particular country, and, as a public preacher, be liable to contradictions, opposition, and all kinds of sufferings, which passionate and prejudiced men might be disposed to bring upon him; and no place or time could be more fit than the land of Judea, and the time when Jesus appeared.

VI. It follows, that in order to understand true religion as published in the Gospels, or the New Testament, men should exercise their reason, and study the language, dialect, and customs of the times when Christ and his Apostles preached, of which times every one sees plain indications in the New Testament itself. Therefore Christian clergy, and people, should endeavour to be as knowing as they can.

VII. I shall add but one thing more to the honour of the Christian religion; that it is no enemy to learning, or any branch of science, that I know of. All religion supposes men rational: the Christian religion was published in a learned and a polite age. St. Paul often recommends to Christians to have the understanding of men; he prays to God for them, that they may increase in knowledge. Every branch of learning has flourished among Christians. More of them, I believe, have understood a variety of languages, than any had done before. Natural philosophy has been cultivated by them. In the early

age of Christianity, there were such men as Clement of Alexandria, Pantaenus; Julius Africanus, Origen, with other learned men, in the third century; Eusebius of Cesarea, and Jerom, in the fourth; men acquainted with history, chronology, criticism, never since such in spirit; not to mention the many learned men of the later ages, until the revival of learning in Christendom, about the time of the Reformation*.

APPENDIX, N^o VI.

CHARACTER of the Rev. Mr. RICHARD LARDNER.

THE Rev. Mr. Richard Lardner was born at Portsmouth, May 28, 1653, and educated for the ministry, by the Rev. Mr. Charles Morton, of Newington-Green.

He entered upon his work in the year 1673, when he could have no other worldly prospect, but bonds, imprisonment, and the loss of all things, and which he was content to undergo, and accordingly had a large share in the sufferings of those times for conscientious nonconformity.

Having had early impressions of religion on his spirit, he joined in communion with the church, under the pastoral care of the Reverend and learned Dr. Owen, whom he always mentioned with the profoundest respect and veneration to his death.

His first settlement was at Deal in Kent; but after some years he removed to London, and some other places; in all which he was greatly beloved, and, as we have reason to believe, had many seals to his ministry, being made very useful for the conversion of some, and the edification of others, in the faith of the Gospel.

He was a little man, but a bold and undaunted soldier of Jesus Christ, being afraid of no dangers or difficulties in his master's work.

His manner of preaching was lively, masculine, awakening like a son of thunder, and generally acceptable to the more serious part of his hearers, many of whom, and some yet alive, have dated their first impressions of religion from his ministry.

It pleased God to continue him a great many years in his service, till he might be justly esteemed the father of all the nonconformist ministers in England. He was a preacher of the Gospel for near sixty years, in all which time he was not only frequent, but fervent and unwearied in his work, till the providence of God, by a paralytic disorder, put an end to his labours in the eightieth year of his age, but not to his life.

He was a close walker with God, throughout the whole course of his long life, and always desirous to be useful. When it pleased God to raise him a family, he was particularly careful, not only for the temporal, but spiritual welfare of his children, endeavouring to secure and promote it by frequent instructions, and importunate prayers to God for them; in all which we hope his labour was not in vain with regard to any of them.

In the last seven years of his life, he had the pleasure of observing the goodness of God in the growing hopes of his posterity, enjoying much peace and composure, while he endured the consequences of his late disorder with an uncommon patience and firmness of mind; till at length, it pleased God to release him from the infirmities of his present life, to a better, January 17, 1740; in the 87th year of his age. So that it may be said, in him have been fulfilled those words in the book of Job, chap. v. 26, *Thou shalt come to thy grave in a full age, like as a shock of corn cometh in his season.*

APPENDIX, N° VII.

LETTER from Dr. SECKER, then Bishop of Oxford, to
Dr. LARDNER; with the Doctor's ANSWER.

St. James's Westminster, December 6, 1750.

SIR,

IF I had not of late been more engaged in business than ordinary, I should have returned you my thanks before now, for the kind and very acceptable present of your eighth volume. I have only been able, as yet, to take a cursory view of some parts of it: in doing which, I have been much pleased with your insertion of that long citation, page 83, &c. with your division of the sorts of books, page 108, &c. and with your excellent reasonings, page 124—137. As to the points, to which you occasionally digress, page 19, &c. I agree with you entirely in condemning all temporal punishments for any opinions, which are consistent with the welfare of society: all claims of submission to the judgment of church governors, whether separate or assembled; excepting such deference, as any one's distrust of his own abilities, or learning, may reasonably incline him to pay to guides set over him, whom he believes to be faithful and skilful: and, lastly, all terms of communion, which are not necessary articles of Christianity, or indispensably required by decency and order. What the terms, thus necessary and requisite, are, all churches, and, so far as they are concerned, all persons, must judge for themselves: and there may be good and important reasons to submit, even without remonstrating, to what we do not approve; provided we are not obliged to do any thing which we apprehend to be unlawful. He who thinks more things necessary, should neither treat those ill who believe fewer, nor rank them with total unbelievers, nor entertain any harsher opinion of the future state of either, than serious and calm enquiry directs him to. And, on the other

hand, he who believes fewer things to be necessary, should not censure those who believe more to be so, as tyrannical or uncharitable, merely because they dare not acknowledge him to be what, according to the best judgment they can form, he is not. The former of these faults I admit to be the more common: but the latter is by no means without example, and ought to be conscientiously avoided. The terms of admission to the ministry may with reason, I think, be made straiter than those of communion. For doctrines not necessary, may be very useful: and doctrines not destructive, may be very hurtful. And every church, both particular and national, hath much reason, both for its edification and its credit, to desire and endeavour to have teachers, who hold and will inculcate the former sort, and not the latter. Still a discreet moderation ought to be carefully preserved in this matter, not only to prevent hypocrisy, but for several other reasons. And yet, surely the danger of tempting men to dissemble, is no more a sufficient objection against requiring some declaration, in this case, than in many that civil life presents; where, however, I acknowledge, that this practice is carried much too far: nor perhaps is there less danger, both of dissimulation and farther inconveniences, in leaving every one to declare himself in his own forms, than in proposing a form to be subscribed. In either way, some will think more articles proper, some fewer. And those of greater latitude should be mild in their opinions of those who have less, as well as the contrary: and every one should labour to restrain and soften those, with whom he has weight. Otherwise, not only at some times power may be oppressive, as it often hath been; but at others a spirit of liberty may degenerate into one of bitterness, I had almost said of persecution.—I have run on into a long letter without designing it. In most, if not all, of what I have said, I am persuaded you will agree with me. But I am sure you will excuse me, if you see cause to think, as I hope you will, that the whole proceeds from a sincere zeal for universal charity;

and a firm belief that you have the promotion of it deeply at heart: on which account, yet much more than on that of your great learning, accuracy, and diligence, I am, with high esteem,

SIR,

Your very humble Servant,

THOMAS OXFORD.

To this Dr. Lardner answered:

Hoxton-Square, December 18, 1750.

My Lord,

I AM greatly indebted to your Lordship for the favour of your letter of the 6th instant, and think it no small honour done me, that amidst your many engagements you have read so large a part of my work. I have reason to be well pleased, that so many things in it have obtained your approbation. It affords me some special satisfaction that the reasonings at page 124—137 have not been disliked by your Lordship; because I had flattered myself with some hopes, they might be approved by persons of good judgment. I am likewise obliged to your Lordship for your free, candid, and charitable observations, relating to the first chapter of the volume. It is very natural to oppose that extreme which is most apt to prevail: there have been particular persons, and some societies, that have advanced and maintained great extravagancies; but oppressive power, on one side or other, has been very common, and produced extensive mischief. In the early ages, when catholics and heretics contended with reasons and arguments only, the juicer sentiments usually had the advantage; which cannot be said of some later times.

I take this opportunity to congratulate your Lordship on your late preferment; which, though it adds nothing to your dignity, if it affords more leisure, may open a new sphere of usefulness. And your Lordship, I hope, will think of making

more

more public some of those discourses, which have been heard with so much attention and applause. If it may not be too presuming, when I hear of your settlement at the deanery, I will order a volume of plain discourses to be left there by the bookseller. I am,

My Lord,
Your Lordship's
Most humble and obedient servant,
N. LARDNER.

APPENDIX, N^o VIII.

LETTER from Dr. DODDRIDGE to Dr. LARDNER.

Northampton, May 23, 1751.

Reverend and dear Sir,

A S soon as ever I had the honour of receiving the valuable present you were so good as to send me, of the two volumes you published toward the close of the last year, so elegantly bound, which I esteem doubly as a memorial of the friendship of the learned, pious, and generous author; I desired our good friend Mr. Neal, to present you with my most respectful acknowledgments, but deferred writing to you myself, till I had read them. I set about the sermons immediately, and read three or four of them every week till I had finished them; but having been something interrupted by my journey to St. Alban's, and the little additional labour of publishing good Dr. Clarke's funeral sermon; after such a delay, I waved writing to you, till I might have an opportunity of reading this last volume of the Credibility. But really, Sir, the labour of my Family Expositor, added to the other necessary business daily incumbent upon me, as a pastor and tutor, with the necessity I have been under of answering letters, of which I have since last Christmas received between four and five hundred, has so entangled me, that it is but very lately I have been able to secure the pleasure which that excellent volume had in store

for

for me. And now my journey is so near, that it may seem almost superfluous to write to you ; and yet, under the load of such obligations to so worthy a friend, I cannot bear to see his face till I have made this poor acknowledgment of his goodness : accept it, dear Sir, with your usual candour, and be assured, that though I am not able to express it as I would, I do actually feel a constant and deep sense of your goodness to me, and, which is much more, of your continual readiness to serve the public with those distinguished abilities, which God has been pleased to give you ; and which have rendered your writings so great a blessing to the Christian world. And I heartily pray they may be yet more abundantly so, for promoting the cause of virtue and piety, Christian principles, and a Christian temper. In the interpretation of particular texts, and the manner of stating particular doctrines, good men and good friends may have different apprehensions ; but you always propose your sentiments with such good-humour, modesty, candour, and frankness, as is very amiable and exemplary ; and the grand desire of spreading righteousness, benevolence, prudence, the fear of God, and a heavenly temper and conversation, so plainly appears, particularly in this volume of sermons, that, were I a much stricter Calvinist than I am, I should honour and love the author, though I did not personally know him. As to what you say of the council of Nice, I do not doubt but it will give umbrage to some who look on its decrees as the great bulwark of the orthodox faith ; but I see nothing solid that can be objected to your remarks, and I think, there would have been much less Arianism in the world, and much less mischief done by that which there is, if it had been conducted in that more catholic manner you describe, as what might have been wished ; and I have never seen any good done by severe anathemas, and secular punishments, so awkwardly listed into the service of Christianity, opposite as they are to its true genius. Neither my time nor my paper will allow me to enlarge, &c.

APPENDIX, N^o IX.

LETTER from Dr. CHANDLER to Dr. LARDNER, with the
Doctor's ANSWER.

Old Jury, December 4, 1764.

Reverend and dear Sir,

WHEN I received your proposals, I determined to purchase the work immediately on its publication, but am extremely obliged to you for ordering it as a token of your respect to me, on whose friendship and esteem I set, as I ought to do, the highest value. I have read the whole through with care, and to my great satisfaction and improvement. The only thing in which I am not fully satisfied, is your opinion about the testimony of Josephus concerning our blessed Saviour, which I have always been inclined to think, as to the far greatest part of it, genuine. I have not time to answer all the objections that are urged against the genuineness of the testimony, but you will give me leave to make two or three observations on the testimony itself.

That it is introduced with great propriety, as what happened under Pilate's administration, and as what was one occasion of the disturbances amongst the Jews in his time.

He testifies that "he was a wise man."

Is uncertain "whether he was not something more than a common man," which is the meaning of the words, *ειγε ανδρα αυτον λεγειν χρε*; for Josephus, upon Jewish principles, could not but think him a man, though he was uncertain whether he was not somewhat greater; a more extraordinary person, than any mere man.

And your own quotation from Josephus, about Moses, that "he was a man superior to his own nature," page 158, accounts for the character given to Jesus.

He says he was *παραδοξων εργων ποιητης*. That, the Jews themselves, his contemporaries and enemies, acknowledged. Matt. xiii. 54.—xiv. 2, &c.

" He

"He was a teacher of such men as received the truth with pleasure." You ask, would he call the Christian religion the truth? Yes certainly, as to the moral precepts of Christianity; which is all, I suppose, that Josephus knew or regarded of it. Matt. xxii. 16.

"He drew over to him many Jews and Gentiles." This was true in the time when Josephus wrote. I refer you to page 169 of your own excellent work, which justifies the expression.

"This was the Christ." O Χριστός νυν. I render the words, "This, viz. Jesus, was the famous, or remarkable Christ." Jesus was a common name, and would not have sufficiently pointed him out to the Greeks and Romans. The name by which he was known to them was, Chrestus, or Christus; as in Suetonius and Tacitus; and if Tacitus had read Josephus, as you justly think he had, I imagine he took this very name from Josephus. Josephus did not certainly believe him to be the Messiah, and therefore, when he wrote this history, he could never mean by Christus the Jewish Messiah, of which the Greeks and Romans knew nothing; but that he was the remarkable Christ, who was the founder of that people who were called Christians. This appears to me to be the real meaning of the expression, and as such it was intelligible to the Heathens.

In the period that follows: "When Pilate, at the instigation, &c." to the words, "did not cease to adhere to him;" the whole is true, and what might be said by any man, though not a Christian, who was acquainted with his history.

The next words, "for on the third day, &c." if he speaks only of what were the common sentiments of his followers, they may be allowed to be his. But, to speak my mind freely, I think them rather an interpolation of Eusebius, or some other Christian; and that the connection in Josephus runs thus.

"They who before had conceived an affection for him, did not cease to adhere to him; and the sect of Christians, so called from him (the O Χριστός) subsists to this day." Such an addition he could not well avoid.

As to the remarks on the expression *των Χριστιανων φυλον*, that *φυλον* is here put for *sect*, or must necessarily signify *sect*, I am not thoroughly clear in it. Josephus certainly uses the word *φυλον* frequently for nation, but I think also sometimes with greater latitude. Thus in a quotation from Strabo, he tells us, *τοπον ωκ ετι γαδιως ευρειν της οικουμενης, ος & παραδεδεκται τετο το φυλον*, not *this nation*, which is too extensive, but as it is in the Latin version, *hoc genus hominum.* line 14. cap. 7. page 695. I also find in Dion Cassius, *τες θελευτικς φυλας γεγενημενας. Qui sunt senatoria origine.* Vol. ii. page 912, edit. Reimari. *Φυλον. εθνος, γενος.* Hesychius. Why then may we not render the words in Josephus, *Χριστιανων φυλον*, *the sort of people called Christians?* And I think it is not unlikely that Josephus should add, “that they subsisted “to his own time” when he wrote this history, A. C. 93.

Give me leave just to add, that this paragraph, concerning Jesus, doth not seem to me, so much to interrupt the course of the narration as is complained of: it is introduced under the article of Pilate, and placed between two circumstances which occasioned disturbances. And was not the putting of Jesus to death, and the continuance of the apostles and disciples after him, declaring his resurrection, another very considerable circumstance, which created very great disturbances? And though Josephus doth not expressly say this, and perhaps had good reasons for not saying it, yet he intimates it, by placing it between the two causes of commotion, by giving so honourable a testimony to Jesus, and telling us, that he was crucified at the instigation of the chief persons of the nation. It would scarce have been decent in him to have said more on this head.

I have sometimes thought that this passage was originally in Josephus, and that Josephus himself omitted it afterwards in some other copies, at the desire of some of his own nation, as containing too honourable an account of Jesus, or that they falsified some other copies by omitting it; and I think, as you allow, with great reason, his testimony to the Baptist to be genuine, it is not to be accounted for, that he should wholly omit to say any thing of Jesus.

But

But I beg your pardon for giving you the trouble of so long a letter, especially as what I have urged may appear to be of little weight. I own I cannot wholly give up the passage, and yet I feel the weight of your objections against it. Your book will ever remain a solid proof of your learning, candour, and good judgment; and I pray God continue your life till you have finished your design, and every other view for the service of religion. I am, with the sincerest affection and esteem,

Reverend and dear Sir,

Your greatly obliged, and

most humble Servant,

SAMUEL CHANDLER.

To this Dr. Lardner answered :

Reverend and dear Sir,

I AM much obliged to you for your friendly and valuable letter of December 4, and for all your arguings therein upon the subject : which you have urged with great force, and to the best advantage : and I will further consider. In the mean time, you may be sensible, that I cannot be easily moved from an opinion, which I have long held agreeable to the sentiments of very judicious critics.

The testimony of Josephus to the fulfilment of our Saviour's predictions in the destruction of Jerusalem, is invaluable. His accounts of the state of things in Judea, before the commencement of the war, and during the ministry of our Saviour and his apostles, are also very valuable, indeed above all price. But I do not perceive, that we at all want the suspected testimony to Jesus, which was never quoted by any of our Christian ancestors before Eusebius. Nor do I recollect that he has any where mentioned the name, or word, Christ, or Messiah, in any of his works, except the testimony above-mentioned, and the passage concerning James the Lord's brother. If you recollect any place, where Messiah is mentioned by him, let me know it. If that word is never

to

to be found in him elsewhere, he must have designedly and studiously declined it; for he had many occasions to mention it. It therefore is unlikely, he should produce that word in speaking of Jesus. Explain the term as you please, it must be unaccountable, that it should be brought in here. This, I now mention to you; but, as before said, I will further weigh your reasons.

You seem to be well acquainted with an argument proposed in a Dissertation, &c. published at Oxford some years ago, and ascribed to Dr. Nathaniel Foster. I shall be obliged to you, if you have leisure, to inform me whether that Dr. Foster be still living, and what are his preferments: if he be dead, what was his station, and of what other works was he author. For possibly I may be obliged publicly to make some remarks upon his discourse. If I do, a farther acquaintance with the writer of it will be expedient. For there have been several of that name, Foster.

Wishing you continued success in your studies and public labours, I remain, with the sincerest regard,

Your friend and servant,

December, 31, 1764.

N. LARDNER.

A P P E N D I X, N° X.

OBSERVATIONS on the Testimony of JOSEPHUS.

Communicated by the Rev. Mr. HENLEY.

To the Rev. Dr. KIPPIS.

Rendleham, Suffolk, Dec. 4, 1786.

SIR,

THE testimony of Josephus concerning CHRIST having been considered in a new point of view, since the death of Dr. Lardner, by my learned friend the Abbé du Voisin (who hath

hath lately quitted the divinity chair, which he had filled for several years in the Sorbonne, with the highest reputation), I take the liberty of transmitting to you his communication upon that subject, as a valuable Supplement to Dr. Lardner's remarks; and, at the same time, to subjoin the late Abbé Bullet's observations, which I doubt not will be the more acceptable to the public, as Dr. Lardner was long anxious to avail himself of the book which contains them, [Histoire de l'Etablissement du Christianisme, tirée des seuls Auteurs Juifs et Payens, &c.] but was never able to procure it.

I am,

S I R,

With great respect,

Your obedient servant,

S. HENLEY.

"MANY critics since the time of Osiander, Blondel, Tanaquil Faber, and Le Clerc, have suspected, but, in my opinion, unwarrantably, the authenticity of this celebrated testimony: for—1. It is extant in all the copies of Josephus, both unpublished and published. Baronius, Annal. Ecclesiastic. ad an. 134, relates, that a manuscript of this historian's Antiquities was found in the library of the Vatican, translated into Hebrew, in which this passage was marked with an obelus; a thing that could have been done by none but a Jew. In an Arabic version preserved by the Maronites of Mount Libanus, the narrative exists entire: see the new edition of the Bibliothèque Françoise de Duverdier, par M. de Bréquigny.—2. This testimony of Josephus has been applauded by Eusebius (Hist. Ecclesiastic. lib. i. c. 10—Demonstrat. Evangelic. lib. iii. c. 5.), Jerom (Catal. Script. Ecclesiastic.), Rufinus (Histor. lib. i.), Isidorus of Pelusium, Sozomen, Cassiodorus, Nicephorus, and many more, who all indisputably had seen various manuscripts, and of considerable antiquity.—3. The style of the passage so exactly resembles the other writings of Josephus, that, to adopt the expression of Huetius, one egg is not more like to another. Proofs of this assertion may be seen in the dissertation of Daubuz, subjoined to Havercamp's edition.

—4. Josephus

—4. Josephus not only mentions, with respect, John Baptist (Antiquit. lib. xviii. c. 1) but also James : “ Ananus assembled the Jewish Sanhedrim, and brought before it James the brother of Jesus who is called Christ, with some others, whom he delivered over to be stoned, as infractors of the law.” Lib. xx. c. 8. This passage, the authenticity of which has never been suspected, contains an evident reference to what had been already related concerning Christ ; for why else should he describe James, a man of himself but little known, as the brother of Jesus, if he had made no mention of Jesus before ?

—5. It is highly improbable that Josephus, who hath discussed with such minuteness the history of this period—mentioned Judas of Galilee, Theudas, and the other obscure pretenders to the character of the Messiah—as well as John Baptist and James the brother of Christ—should have preserved the profoundest silence concerning Christ himself, whose name was at that time so celebrated both amongst the Jews and the Romans. But in all the writings of Josephus not a hint occurs on the subject, except the testimony in question.—6. Let no one persuade himself that this passage was forged either by Eusebius, who first cited it, or any other earlier writer ; for the Christian cause is not only so far from needing any fraud to support it, that nothing could be more destructive to its interest, more especially a fraud so palpable and obtrusive.

It has been objected by Blondel, That what is here related of Christ could not possibly have been recorded by Josephus, who was not only a Jew, but rigidly attached to the Jewish religion : viz. “ That Christ could scarcely be said to be a ‘‘ man,’’ that is, that he was God, that he was a performer of wonderful works, a teacher of truth, moreover, Christ or the Messiah, whom the prophets had foretold ; and, finally, who appeared on the third day restored to life. These are not the expressions of a Jew, but a Christian.

To this however it may be answered, That Josephus was not so addicted to his own religion, as to approve the conduct and opinion of the Jews concerning Christ and his doctrine. From the moderation which pervades his whole narrative of

the Jewish war, it may be justly inferred, that the fanatic fury which the chief men of his nation exercised against Christ, could not but have been displeasing to him. He has rendered that attestation to the innocence, sanctity, and miracles of Christ, which the fidelity of history required. Nor does it follow that he was necessitated to renounce, on this account, the religion of his fathers. Either the common prejudice of the Jews, that their Messiah would be a victorious and temporal sovereign, or the indifference so prevalent in many, towards controverted questions, might have been sufficient to prevent him from renouncing the religion in which he had been brought up, and embracing a new one, the profession of which was attended with danger: or else, he might think himself at liberty to be either a Jew or a Christian, as the same God was worshipped in both systems of religion. On either of these suppositions, Josephus might have written every thing which this testimony contains. By the expression, "if it be right to speak of him as a man," it is not meant to imply that Christ is God, but only an extraordinary man, one whose wisdom and works had raised him above the common condition of humanity. He represents him as "a performer of wonderful works," because miracles were wrought by him, as the Jews themselves were obliged to confess. He styles him "an instructor of those who gladly received the truth," both because the moral precepts of Christ were such as Josephus approved, and also because the disciples of Christ were influenced by no other motive than the desire of discerning it. The phrase "this man was Christ," or rather, ὁ Χριστὸς είναι, "Christ was this man," by no means intimates that Jesus was the Messiah, but only that he was the person called Christ both by the Christians and Romans, amongst whom Josephus wrote: just as if we should say, in our language, "this was the same man as he named Christ." As to the resurrection of Christ, and the prophecies referring to him, Josephus rather speaks the language used by the Christians, than his own private opinion; or else he thought that Christ had appeared after his revival, and that the prophets had foretold this event: a point which, if admitted, and he had been consistent,

ought

ought to have induced him to embrace Christianity. But there might be many circumstances to prevent his becoming a proselyte, as every one will readily imagine; nor is it either new or wonderful, that men, especially in their religious concerns, should contradict themselves, and withstand the conviction of their own minds. It is certain that, of our own times, no one hath spoken in higher terms concerning Christ than the philosopher of Geneva, who nevertheless, not only in his other writings, but also in the very work which contains this most eloquent eulogium, inveighs against the Christian religion with acrimony and rancour.

It has been further objected, That no person before Eusebius ever mentioned this testimony; neither Justin in his dialogue with Trypho the Jew; nor Clemens Alexandrinus, who made so many extracts from ancient authors; nor Origen against Celsus: but, on the contrary, in the 35th chapter of the 1st book of that work, Origen openly affirms that Josephus, who had mentioned John Baptist, did not acknowledge Christ; and therefore it is inferred, that before the age of Eusebius this testimony had no existence in the copies of Josephus.

To this it may be answered, That there is no strength in this negative argument against Eusebius, drawn from the silence of the ancient fathers. The fathers did not cite the testimony of Josephus, either because they had no copies of his writings; or, because his testimony was foreign to the scope of their own; or, because it could be of little use, especially in the earliest times, when the miracles of Christ were admitted by the Jews at large; or, because that for this very testimony the evidence of Josephus was disregarded by the Jews themselves. To this last consideration Justin apparently alluded, when he thus addressed himself to Trypho: "Ye yourselves know, O Jews! "that Jesus is risen again and ascended into heaven, according as the prophets foretold." What Origen asserted was not, that Christ was unknown to Josephus, but only that Josephus did not acknowledge him as the Christ or Messiah, Ιησον & καλαδεξαμενοι ειναι Χριστον, and in his Commentary on Matthew, και, τοι γε απισων τω Ιησος ως Χριστω: by which words it is manifest, that Jesus was known to Josephus, but not admitted

by him to be the Christ, or Messiah. Thus much, however, Origen might say in perfect consistency with the passage in question, where the name of Christ, as hath been already observed, is an appellative, without ascribing to him who bore it the character of the Messiah, expected by the Jews."

A more diffuse and minute discussion of this subject may be seen in a dissertation by the excellent VERNET, professor of divinity at Geneva, intitled, *Traité de la Vérité de la Religion Chrétienne*, tom. ix. Lausanne, 1782; and in Mr. Bryant's *Vindiciæ Flavianæ*, or a Vindication of the Testimony given by Josephus concerning our Saviour Jesus Christ. Printed for White, 1777. I mention the latter publication more particularly, as not only coinciding in many points with the preceding observations, but also as having made several converts, amongst whom Dr. Priestley, I have understood, may be mentioned as one. If, however, the defence set up by these learned writers shall be still thought insufficient, let us take the converse of the position, and consider the conclusions drawn from it by the late Abbé BULLET.

"I. JOSEPHUS, who was born about three or four years after the death of Jesus Christ, could not be ignorant that there had appeared in Judea a charlatan, impostor, magician, or prophet, called Jesus, who had either performed wonders, or found the secret of persuading numbers to think so. He could not but know that, in his own time, there still were in that province many who acknowledged this man as their master. When he was himself carried captive to Rome, it must have been notorious to him, that Nero had punished, in the most extraordinary and unheard-of manner, a great number of Christians in that city; he must have been aware, that their martyrdom had been exhibited as a spectacle to the Roman people, and was a spectacle of so uncommon a kind, as to have been recorded by Tacitus and Suetonius in the annals of the empire. He must have seen that, under Domitian, the Christians were prosecuted both

in

in Rome and the provinces, and put to death publicly by the orders of the emperor.

II. Ought not Josephus then to have taken some notice of Jesus and his disciples, in his history? Or did he think the subject too inconsiderable to occupy a place in it? That he did not, may be concluded from the following reasons.

1. In the time of this historian, the Christians were of themselves so numerous a society as to engage the attention of the Roman emperors. These sovereigns of the world enacted edicts against them, devoted them to death, and caused the magistrates every where to pursue them. The faith of history, therefore, required that they should not be passed over in silence. Thus thought Tacitus and Suetonius, to whom the Christians, as a sect, were a much less interesting object than to a Jew, like Josephus. These two historians considered the rise and establishment of Christianity as of sufficient magnitude to rank amongst the great events transmitted by them to posterity.

2. Josephus in his Antiquities, book xviii. c. 2, has mentioned three sects amongst the Jews, the Essenes, the Sadducees, and the Pharisees; though the two last had ceased to exist after the downfall of their nation, and at the time when he wrote. He ought not then to have been silent in respect to the sect of Christians, which had been formed amongst the Jews, and not only subsisted in his own time, but had increased in a very different manner from the others he had mentioned, and was extended through the various provinces of the empire, and the capital itself; whilst they had scarcely exceeded the confines of Judea.

3. Josephus has given an accurate account of all the impostors, or heads of parties, which arose amongst the Jews, from the empire of Augustus to the ruin of Jerusalem.

He relates, that Judas of Galilee stirred up the Jews to an insurrection against the Romans; Antiq. book xviii. c. 1. And also, that the president Tiberius Alexander caused the two sons of this insurgent to be crucified; Book xx. c. 5.

He recounts that an impostor assembled the Samaritans upon mount Gerizim, under the pretence of discovering to them the sacred vessels which Moses had there buried.

He speaks of the preaching of John Baptist, and the concourse of people which flocked to hear him. He bears record to the sanctity of his life; and adds, that the Jews believed the defeat of Herod's army by Aretas king of the Arabs, to have been a punishment for the crime he had committed in putting this holy man to death. Book xviii. c. 7.

He relates that an impostor, named Theudas, seduced a great number of the Jews, and led them towards Jordan, under the promise that he would divide the river, and make them pass over dry-foot. Cuspius Fadus, president of Judea, having received notice of this expedition, dispatched a party of soldiers, who slew Theudas, and brought back his head to the president. Book xx. c. 2.

He mentions that Felix, president of the province, having taken by stratagem Eleazar the son of Dinæus, the leader of a large gang of banditti, sent him in chains to Rome. Book xx. c. 6.

He recounts that an Egyptian coming to Jerusalem, gave himself out for a prophet, and persuaded a mob to follow him to the mount of Olives, where they should see the walls of Jerusalem fall down at his command; but that Felix, on hearing of it, put himself at the head of the troops which were then in the city, and charging the misguided populace, killed four hundred, and took two hundred prisoners. The Egyptian having saved himself, was heard of no more. Book xx. c. 6.

He subjoins a narrative of a pretended magician, who drew the people into the desert, by promising them that under his conduct they should be safe from every kind of evil. The president Festus sent troops against them, which defeated and dispersed them. Book xx. c. 7.

Jesuſ was the founder of a party much more considerable, and which occasioned much greater noise, than all those whom this author has mentioned. These impostors, these ringleaders, these men who had collected mobs, had no followers beyond the precincts of Judea: their partizans and adherents were soon dispersed, and at the time when this history was written, nothing but the

bare remembrance of them remained. It was far different with the sect, the assemblies and community which Jesus had formed; it not only subsisted in the time of the historian, but was extended through every province of the empire, and flourished in the very capital. The sovereigns of the world exerted all their authority to suppress it. This party or sect, then, deserved, far more than all the others together, to have been noticed by Josephus in his history.

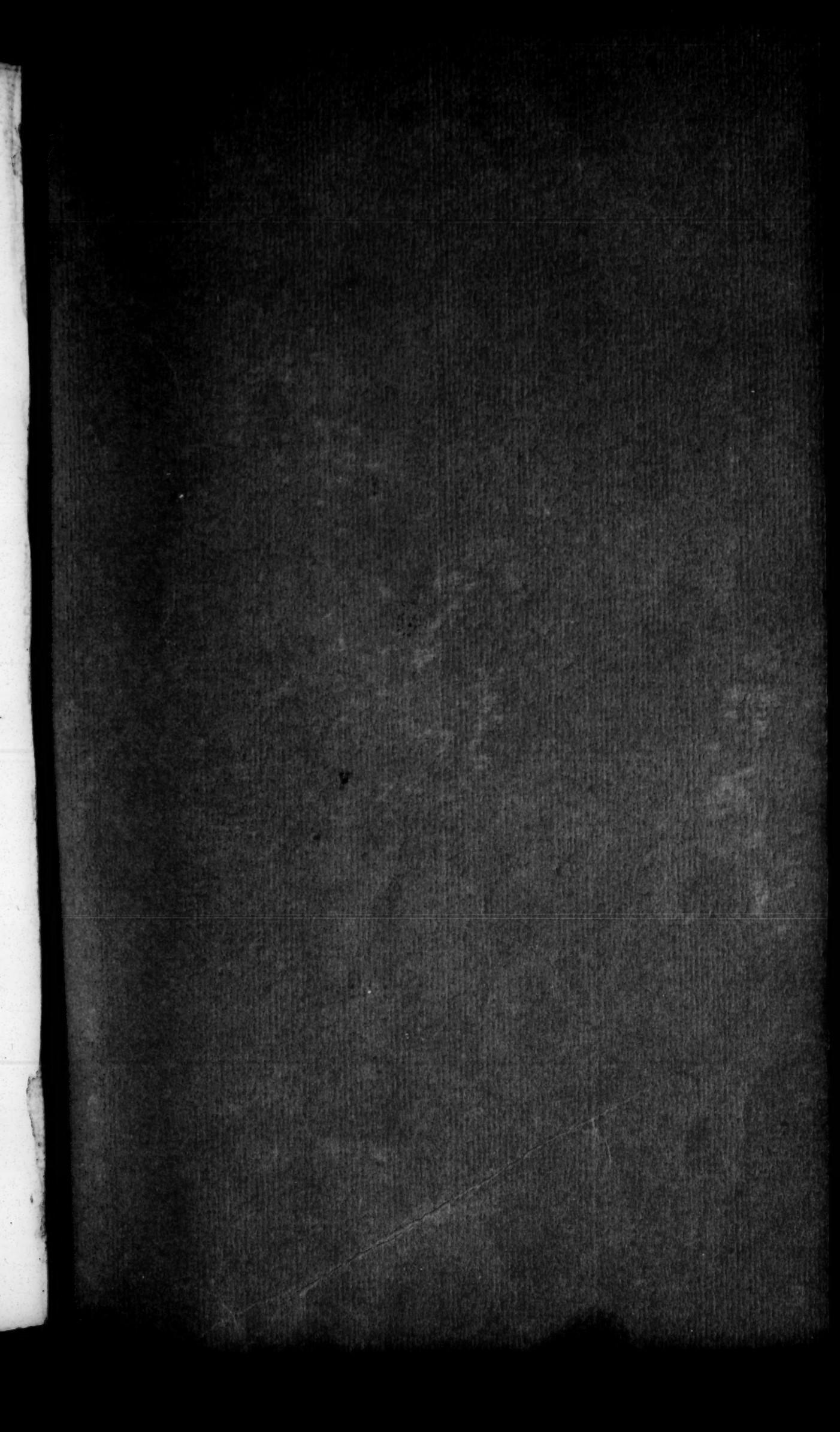
Josephus could not be ignorant of Jesus, nor the sect which had been founded by him: how then, consistently with the laws of history, and the method which he had prescribed to himself, of recording every thing he knew, could he preserve an intire silence on this head? Let us try to solve this ænigma.

Either this historian believed, that all which the disciples of Jesus had said of their master was false, or else was true. If false, he could not have remained silent; every thing would have stimulated him to speak out on the occasion; the interest of virtue; zeal for his own religion, the foundations of which the Christians had sapped by their impostures; the love of his own nation, whom the disciples of Jesus accused and upbraided with having, from a malignant and cruel jealousy, put to death the Messiah, the Son of God. By exposing the impostures of the Apostles, Josephus must have overwhelmed with confusion the enemies of his own people; have ingratiated himself most effectually with his nation; conciliated the favour of those emperors who persecuted the growing cause of Christianity; attracted the applauses of all who looked with horror on this new superstition; and undeceived the Christians themselves, whom the first disciples of Jesus had so miserably misled. Can any person for a moment believe, that a man able to expose so gross an imposture, and who had so many powerful inducements to do it, should, in spite of every incitement, persevere in the most obstinate silence; especially, when so natural an occasion solicited him to speak? If false miracles were propagated for the purpose of seducing the people of our days, with what zeal, with what ardour would our writers march forth

to

to detect the imposture, and prevent the seduction! Should we not regard their silence, on such an occasion, as a criminal prevarication? It appears then indisputable, that if Josephus had believed the relations of the Apostles, concerning their master, to have been false, he would have taken care to declare his conviction: but, if he did not believe them to have been false, he must have known them to be true; and, for fear of displeasing his nation, the Romans and their emperors, held his peace. In this case, his silence is of more importance than his testimony, and equally serves to authenticate the truth of those facts upon which Christianity is founded."





to detect the imposture, and prevent the seduction! Should we not regard their silence, on such an occasion, as a criminal prevarication? It appears then indisputable, that if Josephus had believed the relations of the Apostles, concerning their master, to have been false, he would have taken care to declare his conviction: but, if he did not believe them to have been false, he must have known them to be true; and, for fear of displeasing his nation, the Romans and their emperors, held his peace. In this case, his silence is of more importance than his testimony, and equally serves to authenticate the truth of those facts upon which Christianity is founded."



